







FOR THE HONOR OF A CHILD

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OF A CHILD

BY
BEULAH DOWNEY HANKS



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CONTINENTAL PUBLISHING CO.
25 PARK PLACE, NEW YORK

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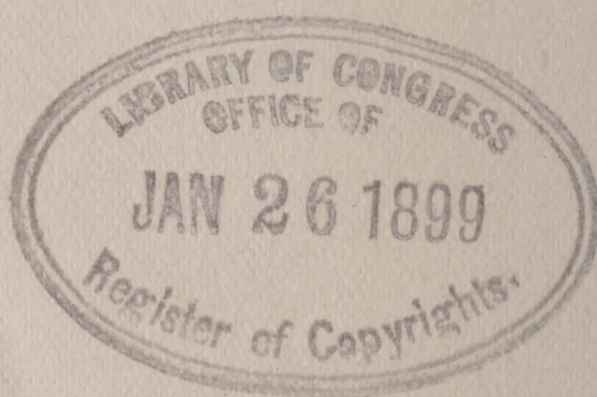
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For the Honor of a Child.

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TO
FRIENDS AND MEMORIES
OF OTHER YEARS
THIS STORY
IS FONDLY DEDICATED.

FRAGMENTS OF A LOVE STORY

*“ Wealth and dominion fade into the mass
Of the great sea of human right and wrong,
When once from our possession they must pass,
But love, though misdirected, is among
The things which are immortal, and surpass
All that frail stuff which will be or which was.”*

—SHELLEY.

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FRAGMENT I.

IDLE TALK.

SHE was a young girl—perhaps twenty—dressed in a white muslin gown, a large hat shading her blue eyes. She had a pale, impressive face, a mass of hair like the sunshine, a round, full throat, and a curve to her singularly red lips that was deliciously fascinating.

He was well built, good-looking, several years older, with clear-cut features, a smooth face, dark-brown hair, a broad white forehead, a good mouth, and magnetic eyes. He wore a *négligé* shirt, with a white tie knotted round his neck; his coat was dark blue.

Her name was Margaret Laurence. Fatherless and motherless, she lived with a distant relative.

Her mother died when she was a little

thing; she had, in fact, but the slightest recollection of her. Upon her father, however, she lavished her childish affections. He had been a doctor. Never at any time had they been what might be called rich, but he managed to derive a comfortable living from his practice.

Doctor Laurence's delight knew no bounds when Margaret early manifested a genius for music. His wife, too, had been similarly gifted, and to Margaret fell her incomparable gift. So her father spared neither time nor money in giving her a musical education, and to the day of his death he treasured a hope of taking her to Germany, where she might pursue to better advantage her musical studies. But when Margaret was seventeen he died suddenly of heart-failure, leaving her penniless. Thrown thus upon her own resources, and standing alone in the world, she had supported herself by giving music lessons.

It was an independent and a happy life, though not an easy one by any manner of means; for Margaret lacked the dignity of years and the experience that they bring.

He was Fairfax Marmion, and his father, at one time, had been very wealthy. Now, however, the family were in straitened circumstances. Before his father lost his fortune, Fairfax Marmion had high hopes and lofty ambitions, but when riches, position, and influence were all swept away on the wave of misfortune, he saw his cherished plans adrift, until finally they were dashed against the grim old rock of vanished dreams.

Perhaps he might have gotten more out of the wreck, had his heart been cast in a different mold. His brother did not in the slightest degree allow the changed conditions to alter *his* course in life. In fact, there was never a time in George Marmion's life when his parents had not given him preference. From his infancy he had been selfish, shrewd, and calculating, demanding all, and giving nothing.

Fairfax was brighter by far, and had greater natural resources than his brother, but he lacked the studious application to books and the innate conceit and self-confidence that were invariably his brother's.

So it is not strange that, when the finances of the family ebbed, George remained at college to finish his course, while Fairfax returned home. Then there came to him such knowledge of the sacrifices made by his father for the college-maintenance as caused a blush of shame to spring to his cheek. He wrote one letter to his brother, informing him of the state of affairs. But it was unanswered; it only served to widen the breach between them.

It was now almost two years since Fairfax Marmion returned home.

Margaret Laurence and Fairfax Marmion had known each other all their lives, and were steadfast friends. Marmion hummed a scrap from a college song, meanwhile touching the horse indolently with the whip as they drove along the broad road.

“Isn’t it dreadful, Fax, to be so poor?” Margaret held out her pretty white hands. “I positively haven’t a single pair of gloves to my name but what are so shabby that I cannot possibly wear them with a white dress.”

Marmion looked at her frank face and smiled. "Well, I'm sure I can't for the life of me see why you should wear gloves, Margaret. I never saw any gloves half so beautiful as your hands; nor any hands, either, for that matter," he said, looking admiringly at them.

"Nonsense, you foolish boy, how you do talk!" she exclaimed. But she smiled approvingly.

"Gloves aren't the only things," she continued earnestly. "Why, just think, I've worn this dress three summers. It's darned and darned and darned, until there is actually none of the original cloth left."

"How tragic! you should get Patti to give a farewell concert for your benefit."

"And I trimmed this hat myself." She lifted the hat from her head, and held it up before his eyes. "What do you think of it, Fax?" She laughed lightly.

"What do I think of it?" he repeated. "Why, I think it's perfect, of course. No one else in the wide, wide world could make it look quite like that."

Margaret was secretly pleased, but she

put the hat back upon her head, and said, "Fax, you are a dear to say that, and yet nothing on earth can alter the fact that it's home-made and hideous. Is it on straight?"

"Yes," he answered, with a smile, "it's on straight."

"Yes, it's dreadful to be poor." She nodded, and the roses on her hat waved gayly. "I never knew anyone to take things so coolly as you. You never seem to care what happens. Now be honest, Fax; didn't you feel horribly when your father's bank failed and you lost everything? Didn't it break your heart to leave college; and your last year, too?" she added sympathetically.

"Do I look as if my heart were broken?" he asked lazily.

"No, you do not. You look as if you had no heart to break—quite indifferent. I assure you, I never saw such stoical indifference to everything in general and nothing in particular."

"Do you want me to tear my hair and wring my hands and howl at Fate? What good would it do?"

“Oh, you know I don’t mean that, Fax! I should think, though, it would be a relief to express your mind once in a while, instead of pretending that everything is just as you ordered it and to your entire satisfaction. It was a burning shame when George stayed and graduated, and you had to come home.”

“We couldn’t both stay.”

“No, but you could both come,” she answered shortly.

Marmion laughed softly as he tucked the carriage-robe round Margaret’s white dress.

“Let me see,”—she raised her eyes thoughtfully,—“what was I talking about?”

“The curse of poverty,” he responded promptly, smiling.

“Of course. I was saying how dreadful it is to be poor.”

“Listen, Margaret.” He turned his head and looked at her closely. “You should marry a prince, or a count, or a duke.”

“Or even an old king wouldn’t be bad,” the girl exclaimed, laughing merrily.

"Well, he might be bad, yes,—atrociously bad,—but no doubt he'd answer," he retorted with a smile.

"Oh, Fax," she cried irrelevantly, clasping her hands, "think of a clear, cold day, a seal-skin jacket, and a bunch of violets!"

"I cannot, Margaret; I dare not. It makes me think of a small hot bird and a large cold bottle." He laughed good-naturedly.

"A what, Fax?"

"Never mind, Margaret; it's a way we have at old Harvard; that's all."

"But, joking aside, Fax," she continued seriously, "poverty is sordid. You see, there is no getting away from it! It follows one round from morning till night, like a little imp of Satan."

Marmion looked at her, and said nothing. He pressed his firm lips together.

"Isn't it nice, Fax, to be such good friends?"

"Heavenly," he answered, with a low laugh.

"Now it would just break my heart," she continued, "to have some people know to

what low devices I sink to keep up appearances. You see, I try to make the world in general think I go without my gloves because I'm vain of my hands; that I buy a pattern bonnet every year, whereas every blessed minute I'm cudgeling my brain to think how I can trim the old one over—and all that sort of thing. But, some way, with you it's different. It's a joy to be perfectly candid! You are the best friend I ever had, Fax, and I am quite sure," she added simply, "that I never want a better one."

He held the lax reins in one hand, and the whip in the other, resting indolently against the soft back of the phaeton.

Suddenly he turned and looked at her with burning, wistful eyes. "No need to tell, Margaret, how I feel toward you," he said softly.

A deep flush dyed her face. She felt that no one else had ever seen that look in his dark eyes. When he ceased speaking she sat silent and gazed steadily at the glory of the sunset. Every color of the rainbow was reflected in the changing hues of the radiant sky as the sun sank to rest in fiery

grandeur. A soft breeze was stirring, and the chilly air was filled with the subtle perfume of departing summer.

"How still and fragrant it is," she said in a low voice. "And how beautiful the world is."

"And yet, Margaret, you think it is dreadful to be poor," he said thoughtfully.

"Yes, I think so," she answered, with an emphatic nod. "But that doesn't keep me from thinking the world is beautiful, does it?"

"And I suppose," he said slowly, "that you intend to marry for money."

"I didn't say so," she retorted quickly. "What an idea!"

"But a very good idea, you must admit, Margaret."

She looked at him in surprise. To her his face looked strange and unnatural.

"It is so much easier," he went on relentlessly, "to love a man if he only has a few dollars. And poverty is sordid, and mean, and degrading, just as you say, and——"

"Stop, Fax! I didn't mean that. You

misunderstood me. You don't know what you are saying."

"Yes, I know what I am saying," he said with a forced smile.

"Well, then, I think you are unkind to speak in that way." She turned her head away, to hide the tears that sprang to her eyes.

"I didn't mean to be unkind," he said in a softer voice. "But I wouldn't blame any girl marrying for money. And I wouldn't be cowardly and mean enough to spoil a girl's life by asking her to share a bread-and-water existence with me. Poor devils haven't any business to live," he concluded bitterly.

"Why, Fax Marmion, what a ridiculous boy you are! I never saw you in such a strange mood before. What are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about poverty," he answered grimly. "Poverty, the little imp of Satan."

"Well, Fax, if you feel as you say you do, why don't you marry for money yourself?"

“Not in a thousand years. Not if the woman weighed a ton, and was worth her weight in gold.” He shrugged his shoulders.

“Let’s change the subject, Fax,” she said softly. “I’m afraid you misconstrued what I said.” She laid her hand lightly on his arm. He clasped it in his and drew it quickly toward him. “Forgive me, Margaret,” he said, under his breath; “I am a brute.”

“No, not a brute,” she answered, drawing her hand away. “You misunderstood what I said, that is all. Of course there are some things in this world far dearer than money.” She paused a moment, then said quickly, “But let’s change the subject.”

He leaned back against the soft cushions and pulled his hat down over his eyes. “‘And Richard is himself again,’” he quoted with a smile. He assumed the old indifferent air that was most natural to him.

“Yes, let us change the subject,” he said musingly. “You change it, Margaret.”

“Isn’t the twilight lovely, Fax?”

"Divine," he said, laughing lightly.

"And what a glorious evening for a drive."

"Perfect. Do you mind?"—he pointed to his cigar-case.

"Not in the least."

"Now this is what I call solid comfort." He breathed a sigh of content.

For some little time they drove on in silence.

Presently Margaret, who had been gazing pensively at the soft, still sky, broke the spell:

"Fax, what is your idea of heaven?"

"Well, Margaret, to be candid, my idea of heaven is a perfect summer evening, like this, a nice comfortable buggy, like this, a slow old horse, like Sam, and a lovely girl with yellow hair, like——"

"Fairfax Marmion, don't be sacrilegious! I am in earnest. What kind of a place do you honestly think heaven is?"

"Margaret, don't look at me so seriously. To tell the truth, I don't know what I think—my ideas are so hazy on the subject, so indefinable. Of course I don't believe as

some people do, you know, that we will wear crowns and play harps the livelong day; such a performance would be unbearable, stupid, and monotonous. And, by Jove, Margaret, think of an active business man engaged in an occupation like that!"

"Still, Fax, you do believe in a hereafter, don't you?"

"Oh yes, certainly! An intelligent person cannot but feel that there is something after this. Nevertheless, the most brilliant intellect in the world cannot tell me any more in reference to the subject than I already know; so why puzzle my poor brain over it. What do you think it is like, Margaret?"

"Ah, Fax, I don't know; I wish I did! But every time I look at the sky and the beautiful stars, I somehow think of heaven, and feel there is one. I've never been overly religious; I'm too worldly for that; still, though I cannot explain why it is so, I love the Church and every sacred thing. My father said to me, just before he died, that no person on this earth had a heaven till some loved one passed into the spirit-

land. He said that many a little child had made a heaven for thoughtless parents. Mother was his heaven; for he died with her name on his lips. How well I remember his words: 'Paradise is the reunion of loving hearts.' And yet," she said regretfully, "he knew absolutely nothing."

"That is just it; why ponder a subject wholly impenetrable? When you come to think of it, how little anyone knows about life and death. Who can explain to me the cause that compels one heart to cease beating at every passing instant, and at the same time sets in motion another? Why are the millions and millions of imperfect human beings necessary to their Divine Creator? Why should I think of things so maddening? We are born blind, and we die blind, and if anyone knows to the contrary, I am open to conviction."

"Life is so sweet," the girl murmured sadly; "and death, how the very name gives one the creeps and shivers."

"Are you cold? Here, let me put your wrap round you. I think we better change the subject again." He laughed softly, as

he shook out her little white shawl and folded it round her shoulders.

"Get up, Sam!" Marmion shouted, as the lazy old horse stopped to rest in the middle of the road. "For the love of heaven creep along, if only for appearances' sake." He flicked him with the whip, and the horse started on a trot. "He thinks he's running away, Margaret."

She laughed merrily.

"It is really quite chilly," he added, buttoning his coat around his neck. "Your sealskin jacket wouldn't come amiss to-night."

"Yes, it is cold," she answered. "We really have no warm weather in the mountains. Turn down this street, Fax; I must go home now, it's getting late."

He frowned.

"Oh, you may come in when we get to the house! I'll make you a cup of tea if you'd like it."

"And will you play to me while I drink?"

"Certainly, if you care to hear me."

"If I care to hear you? I know of

nothing that would give me a greater pleasure."

Both were silent for a very long time. At length Margaret's home was reached. Marmion helped her from the carriage, and, while he tied the horse to the hitching-post, he watched her lithe girlish figure in the soft twilight till it disappeared within the small cottage. Then he followed her into the house.

He sat by a little table and watched her prepare the tea. It was cozy, and they were such old friends. Besides, Margaret was so easy and graceful in her movements, so dainty in her ways. And she was one of those uncertain creatures whose spirits were either in the clouds or in the depths. To-night she grew singularly merry and light-hearted, and as Fairfax Marmion gazed at her changing face and heard her mirthful laugh, he too was affected by her high spirits, and joined in her gayety.

She spread a white tea-cloth on the table and placed a small, shallow dish of purple pansies in the centre; first, however, pin-

ing one of the flowers on his coat. She brought two delicate cups and saucers, two little spoons, and a glass jar, filled with crackers, and arranged them upon the table. She filled the little cups many times, and, without questioning, put two lumps of sugar in them, as she had often done before: and they both laughed because neither took cream.

He told her some funny college escapades, which, though not quite accurate, were highly entertaining.

And after the tea was gone and the cracker jar nearly empty, she went over to the piano and played to him what he loved best. It was then that the vein of sadness lying so near the young girl's heart found an outlet. For, always, when her hands wandered caressingly over the keys, whether touching the love-notes of some dreamy waltz, or playing the chords and ripples of the old masters, the music was full of an ineffable pathos, and breathed of fleeting joys, of buried hopes, of vanished faith; it whispered of treasures gone, and, alas! never found.

When she finished she turned on the stool, and sat motionless.

There was stillness in the room. He rose and came toward her.

“Good-night, Margaret,” he said softly; “and thank you.”

She sprang to her feet, as if wakened from a dream; she stretched her white hand out to him and smiled into his eyes. Her cheeks were flushed and her blue eyes were lambent.

“Good-night, Fax,” she answered gently.

FRAGMENT II.

SHE MARRIED A SPANIARD.

FAIRFAX MARMION, sitting on the steps of a pretty Queen Anne cottage, looked thoughtfully around him. Having been away from home eight years,—the greater part of the time spent in Mexico,—he now felt like a stranger in a strange land. To him everything seemed changed and unfamiliar.

A sweet little woman, with silver hair on her temples, delicate wrinkles in her face, and brown eyes still bright and youthful as his own, sat near him in a low rocker, casting tender, loving glances at him, and chatting of the changes taken place during the past eight years. An unfinished baby's sock lay on her lap, the ball of yarn had fallen at her feet. Every detail of his

father's death was told, and her tender voice filled with emotion as she trailed into the past.

However, by and by, she became cheerful, and somewhat elated, as she drifted to the subject of his brother's marriage to a wealthy girl, and of his prosperous political career in an adjoining city. It was the eve of election, and George Marmion was deep in the race; and that she was proud of him, you could tell by the way she held her head and by the tones of her voice.

So, for a long time she talked; of friends married, of friends separated, of the prosperity of some, the adversity of others. She had been so much alone of late that it did her a world of good to unburden her heart.

Finally she stooped down and picked up the ball of yarn from the floor, wound it close to the little sock, stuck the needles through it, and sat in thoughtful silence.

Marmion's eyes rested sympathetically upon her pathetic figure. "And you have been lonely, mother? You poor little thing!"

“Sometimes I have been lonely, Fairfax. Still,” she added cheerfully, “I have my flowers, and they need my constant care. And then, once in a while, when he can spare the time, George comes with his family, and that makes a pleasant change.”

“And once in a while I come, mother: say, every eight years or so; and that breaks the monotony a little.”

“You are the same boy,” she said, with a smile. “At first your face looked older and graver, but now it looks just as it did when you left home, with the exception of that coat of tan. Why, George looks ten years older than you do, and he is two years younger.”

“Well, I’ll wager I feel twenty years older than he does, if I do look younger.”

“You see, he wears a pointed beard now,” Mrs. Marmion explained; “that makes him appear older, for one thing, and then his hair is very thin—he’s nearly bald. Yours is so thick.”

“How that must hurt his self-conceit!” Marmion said, with a smile.

“No, it’s rather becoming. He’s very

philosophical about it; he says he never saw a bald-headed fool."

"Humph! he must remember there are exceptions to every rule."

"I never could understand, Fairfax, why you and George are not better friends—and brothers, too," she said regretfully.

"And *I* never could understand why people should care for each other simply because the tie of blood exists. Because a man is my brother is no sign I care for his company, is it? Do you suppose for an instant that I love you just because you're my mother?"

"Without doubt."

"Not so. I would love you just as hard were you someone else's mother."

Mrs. Marmion laughed. She loved both sons; but one appealed to her head, the other to her heart. "Don't be so contrary, Fairfax, you always were a mass of contradictions. It's well I understand you."

"I wish that I did," he responded hastily. "But really I'm not contrary, mother. George and I were never congenial and

never will be if we live a hundred years. He's not my style, that's all."

"George has always been a good boy. I have great honor and respect for him," the mother went on loyally. "And I must say he has managed his affairs beautifully of late."

"He is a master hand at that," Marmion said *sotto voce*. "His theory is, Life is what we make it. But I can't agree with him there; for, I think circumstances so often alter the course of one's life."

"Not with him."

"Alice is lovely," Mrs. Marmion proceeded cheerfully. "Think how lucky he was to get an adoring wife like Alice, combined with youth, beauty, and money."

"And think how unlucky she was," Marmion laughed.

"Fairfax, have you no respect for your mother?" she said, smiling down on him with mock severity.

He leaned back and kissed her hand. "All the respect in the universe for my mother, but none for George."

"I'm afraid Alice won't like you, Fair-

fax. She thinks George is perfect. She's so proud of him, and actually has an idea that some day he'll be President of the United States.

"Heaven forbid!" Marmion said fervently.

"Ah, my dear boy," she said, "I often sit and dream of the time when you were little fellows. You two never did get along together; there was nothing you did not quarrel about. George always had such good judgment. But you, my dear, were awful. Why, poor father used to say that he no sooner got you out of one scrape than you were into another a thousand times worse. Yet no one knows how he loved you. He couldn't disguise from me the truth that you were his favorite child, though he strenuously denied it. I can hear his dear voice now, as he said sorrowfully every time you were punished, 'Poor Fax, poor Fax!' Yes, often in speaking of you, after you had gone from home, he would repeat it so tenderly."

Marmion pressed her hand and rose to his feet. He leaned against a pillar of the

porch. Both were silent, he fixing his eyes upon the large house opposite.

“And Margaret Laurence lives in that palace?” said he presently, with a low laugh.

“Yes, when she’s here; but that isn’t often. You see, she’s only recently returned from Europe, where they’ve been for several years. I believe Mr. Lamadrid has valuable property in Spain. No one seems to know much about him, though, outside his being a very rich man. And no one knows just how much he is worth. He is reported to have made a fabulous sum of money in mines. I believe he claims to have inherited a large fortune from his father; his father was a Spaniard.”

“Whatever possessed him to build such a house as that in this place?”

“Well, I don’t know, unless it was his wife’s whim. You know this was always her home before she married; perhaps it was on that account.”

“How does she look, mother. Is she as beautiful as ever?”

“Dear me, Fairfax, I don’t know.”

Mrs. Marmion hesitated. "Of course, it's different now. She was only a young girl when you left home—wore simple frocks and hats, and always had a pleasant word and a bright smile for everyone. Yes, as I remember her, she was sweet and pretty then, but now——"

"Now?" he said eagerly.

"She wears magnificent dresses and hats, and walks like a queen, and seems so proud and cold. I've never been inside her house, so I know very little of her. I don't believe she cares for friends. You see, Fairfax, I'm an old-fashioned woman—just a home-body—and she, she——"

"Is the gayest of the gay."

"No, no, I don't mean that! She's not the gay kind at all; she's stately and quiet; at least that's the way she impresses me. They live very much to themselves." She paused a moment. "Some way, she has drifted into another world, and I don't seem to know her any more. For that matter, no one round here does. If she's seen, it's generally with her husband. Driving and church are the only places I've seen her

without him. She attends the Episcopal church regularly. It seems incredible she ever could have been poor. And yet there is no doubt but what things were desperate with her at one time. I think it was a short time after you left that she had such a terrible sick spell; however, it's been so long ago I've forgotten just what it was. Anyway, she was sick for months, and when she got well someone else had managed to get her music scholars, and she lost every one of them. And then her aunt died, and there was a mortgage on the house, and someone took it. I've heard people say, rather than let anyone know of her poverty she pawned everything, even her mother's engagement ring, which her father gave her on his death-bed."

Marmion's dark face grew white. Surely she must have been cold and hungry and desolate when she parted with *that* ring!

"Of course I don't know how much truth there is in what they say, and people do love to talk, but I do know that at the present time she is rich, and lives in elegance, with a devoted husband, who lav-

ishes everything on her, which only serves to illustrate the strange workings of Fate."

"It does, indeed," murmured Marmion as he took a cigar from his pocket and lighted it.

"They've one child," Mrs. Marmion went on, "a little boy. I often feel sorry for the poor thing, they keep him so close. Of course I know the grounds are big and roomy, and he has dogs and horses and everything there to play with; still, he must get lonely: he's never allowed to associate with other children. You'd think he belonged to the royal family the way they act. He is such a dear little fellow, too!"

Marmion puffed away in silence.

"Do you know, Fairfax, at one time I thought you were in love with her. It shows how mistaken one can be."

"I was," he answered shortly, taking the cigar from his mouth.

"You were? Why, Fairfax!"

"I mean what I say, mother. Why do you look so surprised?"

"Surely she could not have refused to

marry you!" She looked wonderingly at his strong, fine face.

"I never asked her."

"Never asked her! Why not?"

"Poverty," he said shortly.

"Because she was poor! Why, I never knew you were mercenary, Fairfax! George was, but not you, not you!"

"I am not mercenary, and never was. I did not ask her to be my wife on account of my own poverty. I would have followed her to perdition if I had not been a penniless dog."

"Don't speak so, it's not like you;" she raised her hand reprovingly.

"It is true," he said.

"Did she love you?" A faint flush mantled her cheek.

"I never asked her."

"Never asked her? Dear me! dear me!" cried Mrs. Marmion.

"It is evident I did not sacrifice myself in vain." He waved his hand toward the great stone house.

"Oh yes! I firmly believe that a wise Providence orders everything for the best;

and yet," her voice fluttered, "I'm old-fashioned enough to be romantic. I dare not stop to think what this world would have been to me had not your dear father asked me for my love. Why, we were playmates, sweethearts, and lovers! And how happy we were! in poverty and in wealth!" A tear rolled down the faded cheek.

For a while Marmion smoked in silence, his face impassive, unreadable. His mother swayed to and fro, one foot noiselessly touching the floor.

At length she said gently, "Fairfax?"

"Yes, mother."

"Do you think I'm a foolish old woman?"

"No, mother, never!" he cried quickly.

"You see, Fairfax, your dear father and I were like one person; he was my whole world, and when he was taken from me it nearly killed me. My heart has never beaten since—never, never! Forgive me for being so serious. Of course I know your love for Margaret Laurence was simply a boyish fancy—am I not right?"

He came behind her, and drew her head

back and kissed her on the forehead. "A boyish fancy," he repeated after her, smiling into her inquiring eyes.

"Oh, I'm so glad to hear you say that! Some way, when you said you did love her, even though it was long ago, it gave me such a queer feeling. I cannot describe it. And occasionally, dear, I've imagined you were sad."

"How can you ever think that of me?"

"My dear, I know you're always joking, and your letters were bright and cheerful, and yet—oh, well! your father used to read things between the lines."

"It was all imagination," said he decidedly. "Still, I turn out such miserable letters, with so little on the lines, I don't wonder dear father tried to find something between them."

His words were light, though he did not smile. His mother looked at him puzzled—she never knew just how to take him. Still she smiled as she rose to her feet. She shook out the folds of her heavy black silk, smoothed her lace cap, and laid her knit-

ting in the rocking-chair. Leaving him, she went to tend the flowers.

Marmion stood motionless. He was endeavoring to solve the trying little problem, What elements composed a boyish fancy?

Presently an open carriage drew up in front of the great stone house. Leaning back in its comfortable depths was a woman of rare loveliness, elegantly gowned in costly lace; a violet toque rested upon her abundant hair. Her face was very pale. By her side sat a child; and he too was beautifully dressed. Fairfax Marmion gave a start! It was Margaret Lamadrid and her son! The years had turned her yellow hair to burnished bronze, and deepened her eyes to a violet hue; but there was no mistaking her face.

The problem of a boyish fancy was solved so far as he was concerned—it was the chrysalis of a fearful and wonderful love.

As in a dream he saw her mount the steps, graceful, slender, and shapely, one hand clasping the boy's, the other slightly lifting her dress from the violet silk petticoat beneath.

She passed into the house; and when the massive door closed, a feeling of desolation came over him. And yet everything he had ever hoped or dreamed for Margaret Laurence had come true—riches! honor! happiness! love! Was it really a fact that they had been such good friends? Friends! Why, he had loved her all his life. And he loved her now; for the mere sight of that face set his heart beating wildly and caused the blood to quicken in his veins. They too had been playmates, and sweethearts, and lovers; while now eternal seas rolled between them, and they had not even one thought in common.

He lived over the scenes of those dear days, that could not come again. And especially did one never-to-be-forgotten day haunt him hopelessly—a day when he was very ill and Margaret had come to him with a soft, wistful look. But he had hardened his heart, sealed his lips, and cast away the treasure of her love.

And now she could never be his! He was forgotten! His philosophy of resignation was gone.

FRAGMENT III.

DON SANTIAGO LAURENCE LAMADRID.

It was now more than a week since Fairfax Marmion had returned to his home. He had decided to remain indefinitely with his mother: she was lonely, fast growing old, and needed his care. Aside from this, he was tired of Mexico and longed to spend a few months in his native land, under the folds of the Stars and Stripes.

Mrs. Marmion was celestially happy at his decision; it was a glad time for her, a sweet compensation for the loneliness of the past. Her mother-love clung about him from morning till night, showing itself unceasingly in watchful tenderness: they chatted together, took long walks in the cool evenings, had delightful meals in the cozy dining-room, and lived a peaceful, hum-

drum life—to one, at least, a perfect existence.

And all the time Marmion thought of Margaret. That one fleeting glimpse of her had filled him with the demon of unrest. When separated from her by miles and miles of space, when he could not see her, a certain sad content had rested in his heart. But now? Every day he stood at the window, and, with burning impatience, watched for a glimpse of her. And he was unhappy—yes, wretched and overflowing with misery; for he remembered that he was nothing to her.

To-day he was alone in the house. He sat in the library, idly turning the pages of a book, feigning to read it, meanwhile lighting his cigar whenever it chanced to go out, which was frequently.

Mrs. Marmion had departed hurriedly at an early hour that morning, in answer to a summons from her son George, who, though he had never given his mother the slightest consideration, was selfishly prompt to call upon her in time of trouble. The baby had scarlet fever, and the household,

to judge from the letter, was apparently panic-stricken. She wanted Marmion to accompany her to his brother's home. But this he would not do, under any conditions. So she started off on the early train, leaving him with numberless loving commands as to what he was to do during her absence. He smiled as he recalled her parting words: "Eat three meals a day, water the flowers morning and evening, but never when the sun is shining on them; close and fasten the shutters every night, wear overshoes if it looks like rain," and heaven knows what not! How had he escaped with his life the years spent in Mexico?

The library opened onto a broad low porch, covered with creeping vines. It was his favorite room in the house. The walls were lined with shelves of valuable books, a few good pictures were hung in odd nooks, there was a grate with a mantel over it, a goodly number of deep, easy chairs, some time-worn rugs and soft curtains. Everything was faded and shabby, yet it was a room full of comfort and cheeriness, teem-

ing with pleasant reminders of departed prosperity. Mr. Marmion's extensive interests had been largely centred in real estate. All of this was swept away at the time of his failure, with the exception of the unpretentious Queen Anne cottage, with its neat lawn and pretty flower beds. This was the sole piece of property left the family after the business-settlement had been completed. So they moved from the large house, where they were living, back into the cottage, that had formerly been a happy home for them.

Suddenly Marmion heard a low rap on the door.

"Come in!" he called, looking up from his book.

The knob turned, and the door opened slowly. A little boy stood on the threshold, a little boy perhaps five years old.

Marmion gazed at him in astonishment. "*Her child!*" he said under his breath. He knew it the minute he saw him—knew it by the expression of his eyes, the long, dark lashes, the way the soft hair grew on his

forehead, the scarlet lips, like cherries, the pure white skin. Fate had sent him.

“I come to see you”—the boy hesitated, as if uncertain of his welcome from the big fellow in the chair.

Marmion smiled. “Won’t you come in and sit down?”

The child came in and looked slowly round the room. He was a straight little fellow, with a grace about him that was very charming. Nature had endowed him with physical beauty; and this would have made him noticeable in any rank of life. Aside from this beauty, however, he had a high-born, princely air, as if descended from royal blood of long ago. His clothes, so rich, and yet so simply made, bore a foreign stamp, thus adding to his distinguished appearance.

“My name is Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid,” he announced; and his voice fell on his companion’s senses like a sweet echo from the past.

“Upon my word and honor, you don’t say so?” laughed Marmion. “The Spanish Cavalier, perhaps? Don Santiago

Laurence Lamadrid," he repeated slowly. "Quite a name that!"

"That's what Don Ricardo calls me, and they call me Santiago in Spain. But mother says in the United States I'm just plain Jim Laurence Lamadrid. I was named for my grandfather who is in heaven. His name was Jim Laurence. Jim don't sound much like Santiago, does it? But mother says they are the same, and she knows."

Marmion laid his book upon the table, his half-smoked cigar beside it, and smiled down upon the trusting face of the child.

"Well, I must say, I'm glad to make your acquaintance under any name," he said, with mock gravity. "I was confoundedly lonesome before you came. And I don't think names cut much figure, anyway. It's the individual who makes the name seem nice, or otherwise, and I can't imagine your royal highness with any name that wouldn't be entirely satisfactory—be it Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid, or just plain United States Jim."

The boy looked into the face of his new-found friend and smiled.

“What is your name?”

“Fairfax Marmion, at your service.”

“Have you got a little boy like me?”

“No, I’m sorry to say I haven’t.”

The child’s face fell, and he gazed at Marmion with anxious eyes.

“Then you must be very lonely.”

“I am lonely; perhaps you’ll be my little boy.”

The child shook his head. “No, I can’t. I’m my mother’s boy.” He looked thoughtful, then said seriously, “Why don’t you ask God to send you one? He’ll do it. He’s got a great many little boys.”

“Upon my word, you don’t mean it? If that’s the case, I’ll ask him immediately.” Marmion picked up his cigar and began puffing it into a flame.

“What are you going to do when your little boy comes?”

“That is an appalling question,” Marmion replied, “to ask an old bachelor like me—especially inopportune, since I have

never given the subject any consideration. Let me think."

He meditated a while, wrinkling his smooth forehead into many lines. "What am I going to do when my little boy comes? Well, I suppose I'll play marbles, and spin tops, and fly kites, and play ball with him. Then we will surely hang up our socks for Santa Claus, and have Christmas trees, and parties and presents on our birthdays. In the long winter evenings I suppose we'll sit by the fire, and he'll pop corn while I read the Arabian Nights, and Little Red Riding-hood, and Jack the Giant Killer, and Cinderella, and all the fairy stories penned by mortal man."

The boy's eyes sparkled.

"Then, let me see, sometimes in the summer we'll go to the sea-shore, you know. But, before we go, I'll buy him some overalls that bag at the knee, and a brand-new shovel, so that he can dig in the sand like a sturdy Trojan the livelong day, while I lie very near him, stretched out as comfortable as a clam, with my briar-wood pipe in my mouth. As for myself, I'll think what a

fine fellow he is, and how favored I am by the gods. And, of course, I'll be sorry for all the other inhabitants of the earth, to think that none of them have quite such a nice little boy as mine. But that goes without saying!"

"Are you going to send him to school?"

"Oh yes, certainly! After a few years no doubt he'll go to school. And after he's climbed that rugged path he'll go to college, where he'll shine in football, learn to row a boat, to vault a fence six feet high, and to exercise his muscles until they are like iron bands; at the same time the minor detail of finishing at the head of his class will be accomplished, and then, after all that, he's going to be something. I don't know what; but whatever it is, the best of its kind in the whole world." With a smile he looked at the child. "How do you think my little boy will like that programme?"

"I think he'll love you," the boy said simply. He had followed Marmion's words with wonderful deference to the end, though he only understood them in part,

but he found his manner exceedingly fascinating.

“What would you like to be, Jim?—I mean, when you grow up to be a man?”

The boy had evidently given the subject some consideration, for he said quickly, “I think I’d like to be a drum-major better than anything else—a drum-major with a red plume in my hat and a stick to throw up in the air. Sometimes I take Don Ricardo’s cane and march round the room with it, and pretend I’m a drum-major—just play, you know. Mother she plays the piano and pretends she’s the brass band. We have lots of fun together.”

“I should think you might.”

“I used to want to be a policeman,” continued the boy, “with lots of brass buttons on my coat and a star on my breast, and say ta-rum-ta-rah. And once I wanted to be a general and go to war on a big horse with a regiment of soldiers; but a drum-major’s the greatest, I guess.” He lifted his eyes to Marmion’s face. “Anyhow, I’d like to wear a uniform when I’m a man.”

“Bless your little heart, I know lots of

men who feel the same way. But have a chair and make yourself comfortable," he added.

"Thank you," the child answered quietly. He held his bright red cap in his hand and walked up to the different pictures in the room, scrutinizing them carefully. "I'm very fond of good pictures," he said in an old-fashioned way, which caused Marmion to laugh aloud.

"I like books, too," he went on, gazing at the walls. "We've got heaps of books and pictures over at our house."

He climbed into a big chair,—apparently as much at home as if all the days of his life had been spent in this house,—and crossed his little legs.

Marmion was wondering what to say to him next. He had never been thrown with children, and this one was certainly a strange little soul.

Meanwhile the boy was gazing thoughtfully into his face. Finally he said, "Did you ever see my Uncle Fax?"

"Your Uncle Fax?"

"Once—a long time ago—when I was

quite small, mother showed me a picture; she said it was my Uncle Fax, and it looked like you—it did.”

“A long time ago, when you were quite small,” Marmion repeated, laughing again.

“Yes, a long time ago; when we lived in Spain. I was sick that day.” He paused, before adding with a deep sigh, “I guess my Uncle Fax must be dead.”

“What makes you think so?” asked Marmion.

“Oh! because mother cried when she looked at his picture.”

Marmion’s heart stopped beating for an instant. Margaret, in the midst of her triumphs and glory, had shed tears for him!

“Wouldn’t you like to look at my watch? I’ll let you wind it,” Marmion said, his honor demanding a change of subject.

“No, thank you. I have a watch of my own. Mother gave it to me on my last birthday. I love my mother better than anybody in the world.” He paused a moment, then said emphatically, his red lip curling, “I don’t love Don Ricardo, though. I hate him.”

Marmion looked at him in surprise.

“My dear fellow, and who is the unfortunate Don Ricardo?”

“My father,” he answered slowly.

Marmion’s face changed color at these words. “Why don’t you say your father, then?”

“Oh, he don’t want to be fathered by anyone! He said so; and I do hate him,” the child said persistently.

“See here, Jim,” Marmion said, “wouldn’t you like to play a game of cards with me—casino, or old maid, or something equally exciting? Don’t you know you mustn’t talk family secrets? It’s not allowed in polite society.”

“No, I wouldn’t like to play cards. Don Ricardo plays cards, and he’s a wicked man. One night he was playing cards with a man and the man said Don Ricardo was cheating and Don Ricardo said the man was a bad name; and then mother said the man was right, Don Ricardo did cheat, for she saw him. My, but Don Ricardo was terribly mad at mother! He took her upstairs to the third story, and

held her over the banister, and said he'd dash her to the bad place if she didn't take back what she said and say he wasn't cheating. And she was sorry, and she said that he didn't cheat, and she was sick in bed. Don Ricardo don't know I saw him, but I did; I was behind him all the time." The child grew very much excited as he hurried along with his disjointed sentences. "Once he threw a brass lamp at mother and spoiled her dress; it was a silk one too, a lovely dress. He don't want her to talk to anybody but me." He nodded solemnly. He was out of breath.

Marmion stared at him in amazement and horror. Was he speaking the truth? The boy's frank, truthful eyes met his unshrinkingly.

"I'm her sweetheart and she's mine," he said fondly, tapping the arm of the chair with his hand.

Marmion dropped his head on the table and covered his face with his hands.

In a flash it dawned upon him! He did not suffer alone! He had shipwrecked two lives. The petty hardships of his life were

as chaff in comparison to what she had struggled through.

The child slipped from the chair and came over and put his hand upon Marmion's knee.

"Are you sick?" he asked sympathetically.

"Sick at heart, Jim." He took the child upon his knee, pushed back the soft brown hair from the forehead, and gazed long and wistfully into his face, where Margaret's beauty was repeated. A sweet sense of consolation stole over him.

"Say Fax, Jim," he whispered softly.

"Fax," the child said lovingly, putting his arms round Marmion's neck and pressing his soft cheek against his face. "Mother hugs me that way. Kiss me, Fax, I love you—oh, I love you so much! Next to my mother, I best love you," he said confidingly. "Do you feel better now?"

"Yes, I'm all right, now," Marmion responded with a smile. "That kiss made me well."

His heart was like lead, notwithstanding

he was as calm as if the cruel words uttered and forgotten by the child had not been spoken.

For a moment the boy sat quite still. He was very serious. By and by he said gravely: "Did you ever see a fairy?"

"Not that I remember."

"Did you ever see God?"

"Did I ever see God? Why, my dear fellow, what funny questions you do ask."

"Well, did you?"

"No; I don't think I ever did."

"Neither did I. He can see you and he can see me, though. Mother says he can see everyone. He made the world, and the people, and the fairies, and—and—the giants. Don Ricardo says it's bosh, he thinks there is no God. But mother says there is, and she knows. It makes her sorry when Don Ricardo says there is no God."

"Certainly there is a God. Your mother is right," Marmion said quickly.

"Is God a man?"

"Dear me, no! Do you see that large book under the table? Bring it here, and

I will show you the pictures. I am afraid I'm not up to date on the subject of theology."

The boy did not move.

"Well, he isn't a lady, is he?"

"Dear me, no! of course not. God I believe to be a spirit—a wonderful divine spirit."

"What's a spirit?"

Marmion got up and placed the child in the chair where he had been sitting, and walked over to a stand and lighted a fresh cigar. His brow contracted, and he turned and looked at his little questioner. He came back and took him upon his knee again.

"Let's start all over, Jim."

"Start what all over?"

"Anything, anything!" Marmion answered hastily.

"Start God over, do you mean?"

"No, anything but that."

Silence for a moment.

"Mother says God is everywhere—everywhere at once. Think how big he is to be every place at once. He's as

big as the whole world. Bigger, I guess. It's funny we can't see him when he's so big. Mother says he loves everybody who is good and tries to do right, and takes care of them, too."

"Yes, yes, it is true." Marmion was gazing into space.

"Well, mother tries to do right, don't she; and she's good, isn't she?"

"An angel," said Marmion under his breath.

"Then why does he let Don Ricardo treat her mean and make her cry?"

Marmion clasped the sunny head close to his breast. "Why? oh, why?" he cried; "that is what I want to know!"

"I like to hear about God and the angels, and giants and fairies," the child said artlessly. After a pause: "Do you know any fairy stories?"

"Would you like to have me tell you one?"

"Yes; I'm fond of stories. Mother knows the most beautiful ones. Will you tell me one?"

"I'll try."

The small figure nestled down again in the strong arms, and Marmion repeated to him the story of the Enchanted Land:

“Once upon a time, long, long ago, there dwelt a powerful king and his good queen in a great marble palace.

“Now the queen was kind and affectionate, and possessed a gentle disposition, a warm heart, and a love for the poor, so that she was beloved by her subjects, and they sang her praises from morning till night.

“But the king, on the contrary, was mean and crafty, and had a heart filled to overflowing with avarice and covetousness.

“He also had an inordinate passion for riches, and cried incessantly, ‘Gold, gold, more gold!’ So domineering and tyrannical were his ways, that he was hated and despised by everyone in his dominion.

“When his subjects came laden with gold and precious stones and bowed low before him, he would laugh loudly, clap his hands clamorously, and be merry.

“Often, however, they searched far and

wide without avail, and then when they knelt before him, stretching forth their empty hands in fear and trembling, he would tear his hair, gnash his teeth, and in a voice of thunder order them beheaded.

“The king and queen had a son,—an only child,—and in the entire land there was not another youth so handsome or so charming. He was straight as an arrow, strong as a lion, with a happy laugh like the tinkle of silver bells, and the people called him Prince Trueheart.

“In the country adjoining this kingdom there dwelt another king, greater and mightier than any monarch on earth; for he had the wonderful faculty of turning whatever he touched into gold. The castle of this king was constructed of gold, the turrets overshadowing it were one mass of priceless jewels, the grounds surrounding it were paved with blocks of onyx, and the gates leading to the princely mansion were formed of massive pearls. This monarch had an only daughter, who sat on a golden throne the livelong day, clothed in a gown of spun-gold. On her head gleamed a

crown of diamonds, and her white satin slippers were studded with emeralds and rubies. But, alas! the face of this princess was hideous to look upon—so hideous, that when the people came to pay her homage they bowed low, with *closed* eyes. And the old king laughed heartily and said, ‘Behold, the beauty of my daughter is so splendid and dazzling that my subjects cannot look upon it!’

“Now, although this kingdom was the most prosperous in the world, containing the rarest treasures the earth could yield, still the name of the ruler did not wield such power as that of the avaricious king, and it was a thorn in his path, a thorn which grew lusty and tall and annoyed him unceasingly. But the wily old king, after pondering the matter, bethought him of a way out of the difficulty, and straightway he dispatched a messenger into the adjoining kingdom, and demanded the hand of Prince Trueheart for his daughter.

“The avaricious king heard the message with profound joy, and sent word to the wily old king, with exceeding haste, that his

son would be honored above all mortals to make the princess his wife.

“Then he summoned Prince Trueheart to his presence, and said, ‘My son, I am, you know, growing old, and fain would I see you wed ere I die. It is my desire that the princess of the adjoining land should be your bride. She is young and beautiful, and upon the king’s death will inherit the wonderful power of touching and turning to gold.’

“The young prince was sorely grieved at these words and knelt before his sire and said? ‘Oh, king! you know full well that it is my desire to obey and honor you in all things. Gladly would I give my life for yours, but I cannot wed this princess; she is fearsome to look upon, and I care not for her gold.’

“Then was the king furiously enraged, and he answered in an angry voice, ‘Out of my sight, oh, wretched son! Let me not look again upon your ungrateful face until you are ready to depart and seek the hand of this noble princess. Three days may you have to consider this matter. If, at the

expiration of that time, you still refuse to do my bidding, I command that you be banished from this castle, and wander a beggar on the face of the earth forever.'

"So the young prince said no more, but walked in the garden surrounding the palace, feeling sad and sorrowful and thinking of many things the good queen-mother had told him.

"When he was a very little boy she was wont to take him on her knee and relate to him a story of an Enchanted Land. She told him of a fair country where the sky was blue as turquoise, the soft, green grass was like a velvet carpet, the clear fountains shimmered like the sparkling dew, and majestic swans glided over the irradiant lakes. And the flowers that inhabited this ideal land were the loveliest the sun ever shone on. There were blushing roses, hiding behind the green leaves; there were tender violets murmuring their plaintive stories to the merry bluebells; there were fond forget-me-nots and bright-eyed daisies nestling in the long grasses; there were stately lilies,

brilliant carnations, gay poppies, and proud dahlias dwelling together in sweet contentment. In short, there was not a flower known to the wide world that had not unfolded itself in this rich garden. Near the lofty entrance-gate grew a bush, on which the queen of this Enchanted Land, a glorious white rose, bloomed in gracious loveliness: now swaying her delicate fragrant body to the ardent caresses of the wind, now lifting her pure face to meet the warm kisses of the sun, now nodding her golden-crowned head to her adoring flowers.

“One day, as the queen slumbered, a tiny child-fairy crept close to her heart and pressed a soft face against the petals of the rose. When the queen awoke and saw the exquisite elf she marveled greatly.

“‘It is a gift from heaven!’ she exclaimed and trembled. ‘She shall be my daughter, and her name shall be the Princess Love.’

“So the queen gave a grand ball in honor of the child-fairy, and the dainty blossoms came. They were conveyed to her royal

presence in quaint pink sea-shells, drawn by sturdy little bees clad in gorgeous golden-brown robes of state.

“Some of the flowers danced in the misty moonlight to soft, delightful music, their lithesome feet scarce touching the green mosses; others were in golden barges, borne by snowy swans over the glowing lakes, and they whispered words of love, pressing their velvety cheeks close together.

“Later in the evening they feasted on delicious honey and intoxicating dew, served by gay young butterflies, from glittering plates and opalescent glasses, and they were very merry.

“And when the stars grew pale in the heavens their tiny heads drooped from weariness, and their tiny eyes blinked from sleepiness, and they clasped each others’ hands, forming a circle around their beloved queen and her dainty daughter.

“Then the queen’s maids of honor stepped into the magic circle and bestowed wondrous gifts upon the Princess Love. And lo! after each in turn waved its fairy wand above her, she stood before them, di-

vinely fair, an embodiment of their own perfection!

“She was stately and graceful as the lily in her gold-embroidered robes, her eyes were blue and soft, like the forget-me-not, her silken hair floated on the midsummer air, yellow as the jonquil, with the fragrance of the violet; her brow, and neck, and arms were pure and white as the snowdrop, the faint blush of the rose was on her cheeks, and the crimson dye of the carnation had tinted her lips.

“Never before had such loveliness and fragrance graced a fair maid. It was of this enthralling maiden that Prince Trueheart was thinking as he wandered alone in the king’s garden.

“The three days sped quickly, and at the end Prince Trueheart could not make up his mind to wed the ugly princess. So he threw his purple cape round his shoulders, donned his plumed hat, bade his queen-mother farewell, mounted a coal-black steed, and rode swiftly away in quest of the Enchanted Land.”

“Didn’t he buckle on his sword?” the

boy suddenly asked, sitting up with an inquiring face.

“I beg your pardon, indeed he did.—And for days and weeks and months he searched for the dream-land and the Princess Love, scouring countless countries of the earth, scanning every passing maiden’s face. And ever and anon he would inquire of this person and that the direction to follow. Certain ones looked grave, and said the way was long and the road rough. Others said that there was no such land, and laughed him to scorn. Yet he was not discouraged, and he went on, and on, and on, from place to place, for many weary days; but never had he been able to obtain even a glimpse of the mystical land.

“One day he stopped to rest by a small stream that flowed through a meadow. He was tired and heartsick, and he rested his head against the cool grasses. Presently a young maiden came tripping along, singing a blithe song. Her voice was very melodious. She was but a young girl of poverty, the daughter of the people, clad simply in a coarse gown, and having

neither stockings nor shoes. On her breast gleamed a pure white rose.

“ ‘ Little maiden,’ Prince Trueheart said, ‘ can you tell me which road leads to the Enchanted Land?’ ”

“ She was silent and shook her head.

“ ‘ But the rose,’ he cried, ‘ where did you find it?’ ”

“ And the maiden replied, ‘ Come, and I will show you.’ ”

“ Then she took him by the hand and they went on together. The journey was through a pleasant wood, with great pines towering above, whose branches were filled with birds of brilliant plumage, and everything was very bright. Sometimes they heard music, and they stopped and danced together. Sometimes they came to deep rivers, and they sailed upon the silvery waters, singing happy songs. Sometimes they rested by the wayside, and ate the wild berries. Sometimes the air grew cold, and the prince wrapped his purple cloak round the chilly maiden. At length they came, all too soon, to the end of the pleasant wood. And now a lofty gate confronted them.

The young girl passed through the entrance and the prince followed her.

“She paused beside a mighty rose bush. ‘Here is where I found the flower,’ she whispered softly.

“He gazed round him with a heavy heart. The place was a desert bleak and barren.

“‘Alas!’ he exclaimed, ‘this is not the Enchanted Land. It is desolate and miserable here. Where are the flowers and grasses, the blue sky, and the glowing lakes? Where is the Princess Love, the embodiment of the flowers?’

“And then he looked at the young girl who stood before him with drooping head. A tear fell from her eye and rested on the rose.

“Prince Trueheart touched the bowed head of the maiden. She raised her face, and he saw for the first time that she was beautiful.

“‘Why do you weep?’ he said gently.

“She lifted her soft dove-like eyes to his, and lo! as he gazed into them, a great joy passed over him; for mirrored in those beaming eyes the Enchanted Land dawned

upon him, brighter and more ethereal than he had ever pictured it.

“How blue the sky! how fragrant the air! how green the grass! how sweet the flowers! how glowing the lakes! how alluring the music! how weird and heavenly it was!

“A subtle perfume stole on the air and a mist came before his eyes.

“When his vision cleared, an exquisite young being, graceful and stately as a lily, stood by his side, in gold-embroidered robes, whose tender eyes were as blue as the forget-me-not, whose hair floated round her, yellow as the jonquil, with the fragrance of the violet; whose brow and neck and arms were white as the snowdrop, and the delicate blush of the rose was on her cheeks, the crimson dye of the carnation on her lips.

“He clasped the maiden’s trembling hands, and drew her toward him in passionate ecstasy. ‘It is the Princess Love,’ he cried, and he drank deeply of the cup of happiness.”

Marmion paused a moment, bent his head close to the boy’s, and concluded

softly, with a smile, "It has oftentimes been whispered by the fairy flowers that Prince Trueheart and the Princess Love were wed and dwelt happily forever after in the Enchanted Land."

There was a look of puzzled wonderment in the child's eyes for a brief period, as if he did not grasp the full import of the story, then he folded his little hands together and sighed contentedly: "That was a very nice story. A very nice one. I never heard it before. And I suppose," he added earnestly, "after they got married Prince Trueheart went back and cut his father's head off and brought his mother to the Enchanted Land, didn't he?"

"Really, Jim, I don't know." Marmion looked soberly into the child's questioning eyes. "It's a pretty serious thing to cut off a person's head, and probably the prince was too good to do that. And I hardly think the old king would let the queen go, anyway."

"Why couldn't the prince charge up to the castle some dark night on his coal-

black steed, and steal his mother away? If the king offered any existence with his cudgel, it wouldn't be wrong for Prince Trueheart to cut his head off with his sword. Anyhow, that's the way they do in all the fairy stories I ever heard."

"It would be more interesting that way, for a fact," Marmion responded, smiling. "I fancy more according to Grimm. If my memory serves me right, cudgels and swords were shining lights in those days."

"Do you know any more stories?"

"No, I don't believe I can think of any more just now. The next time you come over, though, I'll tell you a great long one, and I'll make it good and bloodthirsty for your majesty."

"What's bloodthirsty?"

Marmion laughed good-naturedly. "Wait and see. I'll explain that the next time you come to see me, you little interrogation boy."

At that instant someone was heard calling in a high-ringing voice.

The child looked confused and startled. "That's Bertha," he stammered; "she's

calling me. She was talking to Tom, and I wiggled under the fence. You know, I'm not allowed to step outside the yard. But you can come and see me, if you want to," he said, with a return of his former dignity. "Walk right in the gate. Tom 'll open it for you. Tom's the coachman, and Bertha's——"

Again the penetrating call; this time louder, and mixed with fear and anger.

The boy listened a moment. "I'm not afraid of Bertha," he said bravely, his sweet voice trembling.

"Of course not," Marmion responded vaguely, watching him as he prepared to depart.

"Not even a weenty bit afraid of her," he continued. "But it makes something inside me hurry up. I wonder what it is. Tom's terribly afraid of Bertha, he says he's all broke up and loses his wits every time he sees her, so I guess he's *afraid* all right." He picked up his red cap and moved swiftly toward the door. At this point he turned quickly, bowed with his hand on his heart and his brown ringlets in his eyes. "Good-

by, good-by," he cried; and in a flash Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid was gone, and Marmion was alone.

Alone with hideous doubts and fears. Did Margaret love him? Around this thought all others whirled in endless confusion. He had sacrificed the greatest thing on earth!—the only thing! Everything else was worthless! Love was supreme! Merciful heaven, how dark the world had grown! Margaret unhappy and he unable to go to her! Why, the miserable conventionalities of this life could not hold them apart! He would batter down the doors of the great stone house! He would take her and fly to some unknown part of the earth! Ah, what a heaven! There was no happiness in the world without her. The years before them were too short to tell her how dear, how very dear, she was to him! What matter the frail opinions of this perishable earth! What matter anything, for that matter! Some day he would be dust, and she would be dust, and an unbroken dreamless sleep would be theirs.

FRAGMENT IV.

ENTERTAINING ANGELS.

BUT he did not batter down the doors of Margaret's home, nor did he fly with her to an unknown land; neither did Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid come again. Whether through the fickleness of childhood or he had been forbidden to come, was a matter of conjecture to Marmion. Before the coming of the child, he had resolved to go, like a rational being, and call upon Mrs. Lamadrid, for the sake of their old friendship. If she had forgotten it, or no longer desired to continue it, why it would be speedily dropped; but now he was filled with perplexity and doubt. Things were very complicated; his mind was in a state of chaos. Not for one instant could he forget the child's words. Mrs. Marmion had been detained in George's home, and

would, in all likelihood, be there for some time. He longed to see her and take her into his confidence. He had just finished reading a letter from her—a long letter, filled with a graphic account of the sick baby, interspersed with many minor details of dear George's household. He sincerely wished he could be as interested in the affairs of his brother's house as he was in the affairs of the one across the way.

It was a beautiful Sunday morning. The day was as peaceful and calm as Marmion was restless and miserable. He unfolded the paper, read for a brief space, then tossed it aside. Up and down the room he walked with a quick, impatient stride, occasionally stopping at the window, a heavy frown on his stern face. He lighted a cigar and puffed at it a few times, only to let it die into darkness. He sat down by the oak desk, opened the lid, took out paper, and started a letter; but after writing a few lines he tore it into shreds, threw it into the waste basket, and rose from the chair, uttering an exclamation of disgust.

"I must get out of here," he muttered, "or I shall go mad." He went from the library into the hall. It was a cozy place, furnished with a few chairs, a low divan, a large clock, and a broad, high hat-stand. He stopped in front of the hat-stand and raised his eyes: he laughed softly when he confronted his white face in the mirror.

Suddenly, like a flash of lightning, he remembered his mother's words, "She attends the Episcopal Cathedral regularly." Why hadn't he recalled them before?

In an instant his hat was on his head, and he passed from the porch down the front steps, hastening toward the church, which was only a short distance away. As he drew near, the deep tones of the organ pealed forth, heralding the fact that service had already begun. He sprang up the broad stone steps, paused a moment at the entrance, then entered the church, and was shown a seat in a pew about halfway back from the chancel.

His eyes roved round the interior of the pink-stone structure, so sacred and impressive. He saw dimly the soft, shadowy

angel-faces, glorifying the Gothic windows, the stately pews, filled with a fashionable throng of human beings, the white-robed minister, with kindly countenance, and, hovering over the whole, the mellow notes of the great organ as they ascended and descended, lending to frail humanity, for a brief space, at least, the "peace that passeth all understanding."

And very near him—so near that he might have touched them with his hand—were Margaret and little Jim. He watched them with intense interest. No part of that perfect picture was lost upon him.

Margaret was clad in a handsome dress, fashioned from soft black fabric, embroidered in shimmering violets, exquisitely wrought and colored. She wore no ornaments, none save a bunch of fragrant violets, caught in the folds of her bodice.

The child was dressed in white; his soft, full shirt, jaunty Bolero jacket, short knee-breeches, and heavy-fringed sash, knotted at his side, were spotless. Grace and distinction, as heretofore, were written over all his small body. He was very quiet, and

followed the service with Margaret as he stood on the seat beside her, holding one side of the prayer-book, and turning the pages as directed by her eyes.

Margaret's figure was half-turned as she stood in the pew, and the arm of the boy was around her waist. Marmion's eyes grew dim as he gazed at her pale, lovely face, sadder but more beautiful than in her girlhood days.

It was at the close of a hymn that the boy turned and saw him; a radiant smile of recognition flew to his face, and he forgot completely his surroundings and the solemnity of the place. "It's my friend, mother dear," he exclaimed joyously; "look back and see." A suppressed smile went round the church, and for an instant Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid was the cynosure of every eye. Margaret flushed, and looked reprovingly at him.

When they sat down she whispered something to him; to which he responded by gravely nodding. Later he adroitly drew her face down and kissed it; but for the remainder of the time he was as quiet as

a mouse. Toward the end of the sermon, notwithstanding that he bravely endeavored to sit in dignified silence and keep his heavy eyes open, he was compelled to succumb, and, finally, his drowsy head rested on Margaret's arm, and remained there until the pealing organ announced the close of service.

Margaret did not join the crowd immediately, but remained seated till the greater part of the congregation had passed out.

She smoothed the child's hair, arranged his silk sash, and after waiting a few minutes, they started down the aisle together.

Then it was she saw Marmion, who was standing near the door, hat in hand. For a second their eyes met. Margaret's face colored, and uncertain lights were playing in her deep eyes.

"Margaret—Mrs. Lamadrid," he said, holding out his hand as she stopped near him, "but perhaps you have forgotten me?"

She put her hand into his, and her red lips parted in the old frank smile he remembered so well.

"Forgotten you! How little you understand me. I am glad, so glad to see you, Fax," she said, meeting his intent gaze.

Her manner was indeed that of the warm-hearted, impulsive Margaret he had known in the past.

"This is *my* gentleman, mother," Jim said proudly, as Marmion bent over and pressed his hand.

Margaret laughed.

"Well, you're brave to acknowledge the ownership, I must admit," Marmion answered, smiling.

"He has taken a great fancy to you," said Margaret.

"Why haven't you been over to see me again?" Marmion asked, looking into the child's face.

Margaret appeared troubled, and the boy was confused for a moment. Presently he said evasively, "I'm coming some day."

"That's good news," Marmion answered briefly. He realized that something had happened to mar for little Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid the pleasure of that

memorable day; so he said no more on the subject.

At Marmion's suggestion they sat down in some chairs that were standing in the rear of the church, not far from the entrance. The child evidently did not care to prolong the conversation; his manner seemed a trifle discomposed. He walked softly up the aisle and stood with rapt face and folded arms, contemplating the golden cross, which rested on the altar: occasionally his eyes wandered to the organist, who was marking the places for the evening service.

"What a beautiful boy you have, Margaret! I don't think I ever saw such a striking child. Why, he walks like he owned the earth!"

"Ah! he is beautiful," she responded fondly, glancing in the direction of the child. "I could not live without my boy."

"I scarcely realize you are his mother, though; it seems odd to me that you should be anyone's mother. I don't think I ever could realize the fact if he weren't a veritable pocket-edition of you."

"I'm sure you're mistaken about the resemblance," she responded. "But he is a very substantial little fact, I assure you; and it seems to me as if I have always been his mother. I can't think of a separate existence." A bright, musing smile broke over her face.

"Why do you smile, Margaret?"

"I'm thinking what a lot of questions he will have to ask me about that cross when we go home. He has never been so near the altar before. He is such an inquisitive little fellow, and some of his questions are appalling."

"I can imagine," Marmion said dryly.

"That is one reason," she added, "why I have not told him much about religion. I knew he would puzzle his brain over it to no purpose. It is only recently that I've been bringing him to church; everything is quite novel to him."

"And to me too," Marmion said, laughingly.

"How natural it seems to see you, Fax; and what centuries since we parted. Ah, we are growing old. And yet," she con-

tinued, after a pause, "you are not greatly changed."

"Nor you," he said, smiling.

"You look," she said, "graver and more sunburned; and yet, though it sounds paradoxical, I fancy you are somewhat paler, but your eyes—they are the same."

"And my heart," he answered straightforwardly.

"Then you are still loyal to your old friends," said she, lifting her lashes.

"To my old friend," he said, correcting her. "I am loyal to you, Margaret; there is nothing on this earth I would not do for you."

A sad smile hovered round Margaret's mouth. "I am grateful to you," she answered softly. "There are so few true friends on this changeable earth, so very few. One cannot value them too highly. How long have you been home, Fax, and where have you been all these years—and are you married?"

"Your questions are quickly answered," he said. "I have been home three weeks, I have been in Mexico all these years, and am not married—not even in love."

“Adamantine as ever,” she laughed softly. Then she looked at him earnestly. “Have you been successful?”

“I haven’t set the world on fire, but I’ve made a living,” he answered simply.

“Do you like Mexico?”

“In some ways I like it very much; in others I do not. The winters are delightful, and at the present time there are more opportunities to make money than in the United States. On the other hand, the long, hot summers, enervating and debilitating in the extreme, are exceedingly trying; at the same time, I very much dislike the diseases peculiar to the natives, and, in addition, am prejudiced against the debased currency of the country; but that is a long story.”

He paused; his eyes were fixed absently on the floor, his mind did not rest on what he was saying; he was striving to think of a way to gain her confidence in reference to her husband’s cruelty. It seemed indeed a hard task, more difficult than he had dreamed, now that she sat beside him, a charming reality.

They were silent for some time. Margaret's eyes were looking down, and she did not see little Jim until he stood quite in front of Marmion. Not a trace of his former embarrassment remained.

"Did you ever hear the angels sing?" he asked ardently.

"Not guilty, your honor," Marmion laughed lightly, and put his arm round the boy.

"Well, there's an angel in every one of those round places up there." He pointed his finger grandly at the lofty pipes above the organ, and raised his flushed face toward them.

"At least I'm most sure there is," he added, with a fine sense of honor, as he met Marmion's quizzical eyes. He paused a moment. "Sometimes they sing so loud it sounds like the wind blowing, and sometimes they sing so softly you can scarcely hear them, and sometimes they don't sing at all, and then they're saying their prayers. They're praying now." He smiled knowingly, and his voice fell to a whisper.

Before Marmion could reply to these vis-

ionary statements, the child turned quickly to Margaret, and said soberly, "Mother, may I ask that gentleman up there when they're going to sing again? They have been praying a long, long time."

"Why yes, sweetheart; ask him what you want to. Don't interrupt him if he is busy." She raised her voice as he moved down the aisle toward the organ.

"Children do advance some of the queerest ideas." She turned her face to Marmion. "But such thoughts cannot harm him, even though so unreal. He has never been thrown with other children; in truth he has been so much alone I don't wonder he is a little dreamer."

"Perhaps," said Marmion, "in this case it is as the child says; we have been entertaining angels unaware, as we so often do in this life. This world is illusive from whatever standpoint you look at it, and I verily believe an idealist is happier than a realist. Who can prove that the angels are not in the pipes?"

"Oh, Fax!"

They both laughed.

“But you, Margaret, what have you been doing since we parted?”

“What have I been doing? I scarcely know how to answer, for so many, many things have happened to me. I have lived a long time in the past eight years. I have traveled the wide world over.”

“And you have seen everything worth seeing?” he questioned.

“I think so—yes, everything. You must go into the Old World if you would forget self. We have never been long in a place, never had what you might call a home. We were in Spain for a longer period than any place else; at Limon, a country seat, which formerly belonged to my husband’s father, but which is now owned by his brother. Mr. Lamadrid’s father was a Spanish gentleman. He himself is thoroughly American at heart: he has spent so many years in this country.”

“You have made a great success of your life, Margaret,” he said gravely.

“Do you think so? I’m afraid I haven’t accomplished as much as I should under the circumstances. Mr. Lamadrid is a very

generous man; I don't think I ever knew a more generous one."

Marmion thought he detected a shade of hardness in her voice as she pronounced her husband's name.

"How did you happen to come home—here, I mean, Margaret?"

"Oh, I was homesick! and then I always loved it here. And Mr. Lamadrid thought the mountain air would do us good. He gave me this house we are living in when we were married, you know."

"Margaret," Marmion said abruptly, "I have something I want to say to you—something to ask you. I hardly know how to begin."

"What is it, Fax?" she asked sincerely.

At that instant she chanced to glance toward the door, and her expression changed to marble, and her manner became as ice. A man of military bearing, fully six feet tall, towered in the church doorway. His hair was coal-black, and his dark skin had a peculiar tint of ivory about it. His heavy black mustache was waxed and twisted, and the long ends were curled upward from his

mouth; this, together with his brilliant dare-devil eyes, gave a mephistophelian expression to his remarkable face. He did not say a word, he simply stood and looked at Margaret with scintillating eyes.

She rose and called the boy in a strained voice.

The child came toward her erect and smiling, but recoiled when he saw the figure in the door.

“Don Ricardo!” he exclaimed.

“Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid!” a mocking voice answered.

Margaret turned and gave her hand to Marmion for an instant. He clasped it protectingly, a smoldering flame in his eyes.

“The carriage is waiting, and has been for *some time*,” came in cold, measured tones from the scornful lips of the man in the doorway.

“I am so glad to have met you, Fax. I forgot the flight of time,” she said very low, as she turned from him, at the same time putting her arm round the boy’s shoulders.

“I’d like to kiss my gentleman, mother,”

he heard an earnest little voice say as they passed hurriedly from the church.

Marmion stooped and picked up a solitary violet from the floor where it had fallen from Margaret's dress. He raised it to his lips. After a while he followed them, and stood on the stone steps of the church, watching the carriage roll grandly down the street, till it turned a corner and was lost to view.

Another fateful day had marked his life. Was it really possible that he had seen Margaret, and had let her go from him without one word of sympathy, without the slightest offer of help? Why, a stranger in the same perilous position might have looked for more aid than he had given to her.

And with each passing moment of his life he heard reiterated the haunting words of the child, and the truth of them rang in his heart like an alarm bell. She did not ask him to call—probably she could not. Common humanity demanded that he act, and now he had lost his one opportunity to help her. Ah, if he did not love her so!

He walked slowly toward his home.

FRAGMENT V.

THE GATE OF TEARS.

THE clock struck seven as Margaret Lamadrid came down the broad staircase, arrayed in lustrous silk of purest white, her neck and shoulders bare and starred with diamonds.

Dinner was ever a ceremonious affair in the household. Indeed, it had always been a notable feature in the life of Ricardo Lamadrid. And now, nothing gave his selfish pride greater satisfaction than to see Margaret at his table, her graceful figure set in the magnificence he heaped upon her.

She passed from the spacious hall into a room of sumptuous richness. At the corner of the grate, his arm resting on the mantel, stood Lamadrid, faultlessly dressed. His dark clothes and immaculate linen served to intensify the blackness of his

hair and eyes, the heavy frowning brows, and the Satanic mustaches. He held a small bottle in his hand, which he quickly folded in his palm when his wife entered the room.

As she came toward him, queenly and slight in her rustling dress, he raised his head and looked at her critically, his eyes wandering slowly from the sparkling gems in her hair, to the toe of her delicate brocaded slipper.

“You are very beautiful to-night, Señora, the devil can find no flaw in you.”

“Thank you,” she responded, with a cold smile. “You are kind indeed.”

“Why is it, I wonder, that beggars walk like queens, and queens waddle like ducks?” He smiled sardonically, and showed his big white teeth.

Margaret looked at him as if he had not spoken.

“Shades of Boreas! but you are cold, my beauty; cold as the snow on the summit of Mont Blanc! A marble woman without a heart, cold-blooded and unfeeling, hard as granite.”

"If it were only true; if it were only true!" said Margaret under her breath.

"It is true. You are heartless."

"I am what you have made me."

"You do me a great honor," he sneered, bowing low in derision. He paused, and uncorked the bottle in his hand; he raised it to his lips.

"Ricardo, do not take that," she cried quickly, stepping forward.

"Do not take what?" he asked, glaring at her fiercely.

She looked him straight in the eyes. "Opium," she answered. It was the first time she had breathed the word, although for months she had known his secret.

"Opium," he said contemptuously. "What are you talking about? I never took the stuff in my life. It is medicine for my head—it aches like bedlam." He swallowed the pellets. "Opium!" he repeated, with a low, disagreeable laugh. "That's a curious thing for you to say."

Margaret did not answer; she turned and walked across the room, and sat down before the piano. After a moment she

started to play, with exquisite expression, the second movement of Chopin's weird and melancholy Marche Funèbre. At her thrilling touch, low and penetrating, Lamadrid drew a quick, short breath.

"Stop!" he thundered. "Stop! or I will break every key on the piano. It is the tortures of the infernal regions. It drives me mad, and I won't have it."

She stopped playing and sat silent, her hands clasped in her lap, her eyes cast down.

His piercing eyes rested immovably upon the figure of his wife; and the longer they dwelt upon it, the fiercer burned the anger in their glowing depths. Her very attitude, blended as it was with sorrow and reproach, seemed to infuriate him the more. For he loved her in his own cruel, miserable way, and her heart was responseless to him.

"Strike up something lively, something with life in it. Do you hear? The Devil's Glide, Maniacs' Reveries, Waltz of Fire and Brimstone."

He laughed brutally. "Something inspiring, you know."

"I cannot," she said in a low voice, tense with feeling. "I cannot play such things. Your language is insulting."

"No, not insulting," he said jeeringly. "Only expressive, that's all. But why can't you play such things?"

"It is an utter impossibility; you know I cannot."

"But why can't you? Have all the saints and devils entered into your fingertips? When a person is bent on pleasure it is deucedly unpleasant to listen to funeral marches and dirges."

She sighed heavily, but made no reply. She had grown accustomed to his views on the subject of music; she had heard them too often during the past years not to know them by heart, and rarely touched the piano; it seemed to act as a medium of strife between them.

"Answer me," he commanded. "Why can't you play something spirited?"

She rose to her feet, and turned her proud beautiful face to him, the diamonds on her neck glowing restlessly as they rose and fell with the quickening of her breath. Still

she gave no reply. The two confronted each other in silence, a silence charged with dark forebodings. He broke the ominous pause. "Who was the man in the church?"

"I think I have already answered that question several times: an old friend."

"An old friend!" he repeated in bitter derision.

"Yes, an old friend."

"Am I supposed to believe such a lie as that? I beg your pardon," he sneered ironically, "I should say falsehood, for your delicate ears. Do all your old friends look at you with white faces and burning eyes, as this smooth-faced rascal did? No, I say! No, a thousand times," he cried, "You cannot blind me; *he* is your lover." He lifted his brilliant eyes, like search-lights in their piercing expression, and fixed them on her face.

"Ricardo, do not speak so; you are not yourself. Fairfax Marmion is an old friend of mine, that is all. He is associated with a happy time in my life."

"Happy time in your life! What happiness was there in your plebeian life before

I raised you from the mud and slime of the street? And now you seek your base level by indulging in secret meetings with your lover,—meetings held in a church,—for the express purpose of using your religion, that smooth compound of the Evil One, as a cloak to cover your sins? Deny it—you dare not!”

“But I do deny it,” she said, looking calmly in his eyes. “I deny it most emphatically. He is my friend, and a gentleman.”

Every dark emotion leaped to his passionate face. “You shall not speak to him again.”

“I make no rash promises,” said Margaret coldly.

“Then I will kill him!”

“You are a coward!” She drew her slender body up to its full height.

“Perhaps,” he said exasperatingly, “but cowards have done just such things before.” He paused a moment, then said hotly, “And, by heaven, I’ll kill him if I live long enough!”

Her face paled as she walked across the

room. She stood with one hand resting on the piano.

He sank upon a low couch and piled the soft cushions in a great mass at his elbow. "You would like a divorce, Margarita?" He asked the question with peculiar significance.

She raised her startled eyes, and, for a moment, a pink glow was on her white cheeks.

He shrugged his shoulders and smiled scornfully. "Yes, my Margarita, I know your innermost thoughts. You would like a divorce, with a slice of my fortune and the child. But no power on earth can give it to you. Do you hear? No power in heaven or on earth. Try it, Margarita." He laughed insultingly and made a quick gesture with his hand. "Did you ever stop to think what a helpless, miserable, God-forsaken thing a woman is, anyway? If you should raise your hand against me, and cry to the world for protection, what would happen? Nothing less than this: A friend of mine, a man without a conscience and a king among liars, and whose honor

is not beyond the price of rubies and gold, will tell a pretty story to the court of you and your amours with——” He waved his hand indifferently. “What matter the name? ’Tis an easy task to prove a woman’s shame with such a witness.”

A look of horror crept over Margaret’s face; she made no answer; she did not even make a movement; she felt her body was turning to stone.

“The court would then sift the matter, and, upon examination, would find that I had not failed in my duty toward you, but, on the contrary, had lavished my worldly goods on you. Why waste words; you can see how it would end, can’t you? A divorce would be granted without the shadow of a doubt—but to me, and with the custody of the child. The papers would teem with the sensation! Spicy reading for your son at some future day! No, Margarita, because I am fool enough to love you, I will never set you free. And because you love the child you will never risk *my* good name—aye, my own, in very surety—between the devil and the deep sea.” He laughed

aloud, in derisive amusement. Then the tone of his voice changed to a peculiar softness. "You do love the child, don't you?"

"Better than my life," she said, in a low, fearful voice.

"Better than the man in the church?"

She did not answer.

"Why didn't you marry him?" He looked at her, a cruel smile playing round his mouth.

A gleam of hatred sprang to her eyes. "Because he did not ask me," she responded unguardedly.

"Oh! you don't mean it? What a pathetic story of unrequited love! And now, when it is too late, and you are bought by the highest bidder, and are the property of another, he longs for the moon? Ha, ha! *That* is a likely story. Whom do you think will believe it? I will tell a more plausible one than that. You would not have him; you were looking for bigger game, and found it."

He breathed heavily. His face was gray with fury. The room became oppressively quiet.

“Margarita, come here.” His voice was low, like velvet, and she felt the spell of his evil magnetism surge over her. “Come here,” said he again, with piercing eyes upon her face.

She advanced slowly and stood by his side.

He then reached back deliberately, took a pistol from his hip-pocket, and held it where she could see it. It was pearl and gold, beautifully inlaid, and had the appearance of a handsome toy as he held it in his hand. He studied the engraving on the handle attentively.

“A small affair for honor,” he said musingly, turning it over and looking thoughtfully at it. “Yes, a small affair, my queen, and yet, in my hand, a deadly weapon. With one ball I can stop his heart beating, silence his voice, and close his cursed eyes forever: with another I can destroy your fatal beauty and make it food for worms.” Quick as a flash he held the pistol up and pointed it at her heart. “And, by heaven, I’ll kill you both!”

Every vestige of color faded from her

face; she stood rigid with fear before the half-crazed man.

“Ricardo! oh, Ricardo! For your own sake!” His skin was ghastly and drawn.

At the sound of her voice he dropped the pistol at his side. He laid it upon the divan, and came quickly toward her. His arms closed round her, and he held her as in a vise; his hot quick breath was on her hair and white shoulders. “You are mine!” he whispered fiercely. “Yes, mine!” His voice sank yet lower. “*His soul first!*”

His actions and words were so strange and peculiar that Margaret’s heart was full of dread.

“Ricardo,” she said soothingly, as if speaking to a child, “you are not well. Sit down, and I will get something for your nerves.”

He sank in a chair, weak and listless; he gave no answer.

She picked up the small revolver and carried it over to a cabinet filled with choice Venetian glass and rare curios; unlocked it, and placed the weapon upon the upper

shelf. Locking the glass door, she clasped the key in her hand.

When she turned, three men in evening dress were entering the room, and her husband was shaking hands with them; to outward appearances himself once more. There was a freedom about the manners of the guests that she did not like, and they lacked polish.

Margaret's outstretched hand met them with freezing hauteur, notwithstanding the annoyance it caused Ricardo Lamadrid, who looked at her from the sides of his eyes in a way that was not pleasant to contemplate; but she met it unflinchingly.

Soon dinner was announced, and they passed into the cool, fragrant dining-room. The table was massed with jars of beautiful roses and covered with massive silver and glittering glass.

Margaret sat at the table with a rose-glow on her face. She ate but little. She was feverishly excited as she talked and joined in the toasts. She was too well bred not to take part to a certain extent in the entertainment of their guests, and wine in

a moderate quantity was not distasteful to her. There was always an endless amount of wine served at dinner in the Lamadrid household; nevertheless, to-night, as the dinner advanced, and Margaret noted the empty decanters and saw the champagne glasses filled and refilled and tossed off, one after another, in endless succession, her heart sank with apprehension. Ricardo Lamadrid, in his cups, was not a pleasant personage; liquor to him was as a red flag flaunted in his face, and during his revels he was the personification of profaneness.

As they drank deeper they became more boisterous and noisy, until, finally, Margaret sat white and silent, looking at them with disgust and repugnance.

One of the men rose in his chair and sang a few lines from a drinking song in a loud, discordant voice; and when he finished, he tossed the delicate glass—filled to the brim with champagne—high in the air. To the table it fell with a ring, broken in a hundred fragments, the sparkling wine fast-spreading over the snowy linen. Loud

laughter and enthusiastic clapping of hands greeted this act.

The man at Mr. Lamadrid's right sprang to his feet, his glass held high in the air, and cried aloud in a tipsy voice, "To the health of the son and heir!"

Lamadrid's relentless black eyes rested upon his wife's glass as she turned it in her hand.

"Where is Don Santiago?" he questioned, in a loud voice, as the glasses were being refilled.

"He is asleep," Margaret answered, softly setting her glass beside her plate.

"Have him brought to the table," he commanded briefly.

"He is asleep, and cannot come," she responded decisively.

"H-m! cannot!" he exclaimed insolently, his heavy brows knitted in a dark frown. "I would like to know who is master here? Have him brought to the table immediately, or I'll fetch him myself."

"But I do not wish him to come. He is not accustomed to be up at night, and—

and the wine," she faltered, with trembling lips.

"The wine! What the devil's the wine got to do with it? Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid at once!" he thundered savagely.

Margaret was mute. An expression of doubt and fear was in her face, but she gave no order to the servant, who awaited her word. She was thinking of the small revolver that lay peacefully in the cabinet. She knew almost for a certainty, from his actions in the past, that even in his debauched condition he would do no bodily harm to the child. And yet what might he not do if she opposed him! She had always dreaded this selfsame thing; it was now face to face with her.

Suddenly he arose from the table, threw his napkin on the floor, and, with an oath, strode angrily from the room.

After what seemed to Margaret an interminably long time, and yet, in reality, was but more than a minute, he came back bearing in his arms the child, whom he had wrapped in a little blue silk bath-

robe, throwing it carelessly over his white night-clothes. He had aroused him roughly from a sound sleep, and the boy's face, surmounted by his beautiful soft hair in sleepy disorder, wore a dazed and wondering expression when he was brought into the brilliantly lighted rooms.

"Put me down, you bad, wicked Don Ricardo! I want my mother!" he cried imperiously when he saw who held him. But his father clasped him tightly in his arms and carried him to the great sideboard, which stood on one side of the room, and set him down in the midst of the glass and flowers and rose-shaded candles.

His astonished eyes wandered slowly around the sumptuous scene until at length they rested upon Margaret, whose sad eyes were full of unshed tears.

But she smiled fondly, and it reassured him as nothing else could have done, and he smiled back at her, trust and faith and devotion shining in his face.

"It looks like fairyland, mother dear, don't it?" he cried gayly.

She nodded.

"You are the beautiful fairy-queen, mother," he said fondly.

"Am I, sweetheart?" She flushed with pleasure at his ardent admiration.

"Yes, and I think your dress is lovely, and your diamonds sparkle like everything. Your comb is the jeweled crown."

"Oh, you funny boy," Margaret said, with a laugh she could not repress.

"I would like to put on my clothes, mother," he exclaimed, his eyes suddenly resting on his dainty blue night-slippers.

"Presently, sweetheart," responded Margaret, as a loud, jeering laugh from the men greeted this speech.

Then Ricardo Lamadrid, with trembling hands and a foul oath, brought him a brimming glass of champagne, his drunken eyes leering as a demon's into the flower-like face of his son.

The child put his hands behind him and drew back with aversion.

But Margaret looked at him, and said: "Take it, Jim. See, love, mother has some too." She smiled another reassuring smile; a smile so brilliant, and yet so inde-

scribably hopeless, that it seemed as if she smiled in the face of death.

Lamadrid lifted the little fellow to his feet; and, after handing him the glass of wine, he returned to the table, and, grasping his own glass with an unsteady hand, he proposed once again the health of Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid.

They rose in their chairs to drink the toast; and when the child saw Margaret herself standing with glass in hand, he no longer hesitated, nor did he seem to mind his *négligé* attire, but joined them in the toast in an undaunted, princely manner, that caused another burst of merriment from the men. For he stood straight as an arrow amid the glitter and glare of the huge sideboard, his blue robe falling gracefully from his shoulders, his handsome young head thrown back and held slightly to one side—a charming trick and to him singularly becoming. Holding the champagne glass in exact imitation of Margaret, he drank the wine with a fearless laugh.

Soon after this, when Lamadrid and his boon companions were in a high state of

confusion from the incessant guzzling of the different intoxicants, Margaret was enabled to gather the child in her arms and pass unheeded from the room. It was the first time he had tasted wine, and it made him heavy with sleep; so that his tired head sank on Margaret's uncovered shoulder as she carried him up the wide staircase. She bore him to his white room, where the wainscoting and furnishings and soft draperies shone with dovelike lustre and innocence.

Slipping off his little blue robe and slippers, she laid him upon the snowy bed, and sank noiselessly to her knees. She covered her face with her hands, and her form shook convulsively. There was no light in the little room save the moonbeams, and they stole through the thin white curtains and bathed the mother and child in a mellow halo of light. It was not until to-night that a despairing sense of her helpless, desperate state confronted her: not that she had ever had a defined hope of escape from her husband's brutality, but the child had never before witnessed the scenes that were al-

most nightly enacted in their home, and his introduction to them had shocked her beyond measure.

“ Oh, my little one! oh, my little one! how can I bear it, how can I bear it? ” she whispered softly. “ I am so tired, so tired, my little love; the years are so long. What would become of you if I were taken away? ”

The child stirred in his sleep, and Margaret, stifling her voice, crept closer to him, kissing his closed eyes, his warm cheeks, his dimpled hands, pressing her face to his pretty feet, a mighty mother-love beaming from her fathomless eyes.

“ Oh, God! ” she moaned, “ that we could both go, both rest in one grave. Better far, my little sweetheart! Oh, my little sweetheart! ”

So she knelt a long time. At length she grew quiet, very quiet indeed; she then rose from her knees with a pale, calm face, and stood looking down upon the child with a reverent, hushed expression. His lips were parted in a smile. She felt a vague danger hovering round her heart. Destiny, like

some wild bird of prey, seemed to be brooding near her with outspread wings. She felt instinctively how necessary it was to warn Fairfax Marmion of her husband's enmity, so unwittingly incurred by him. She understood too well the innate baseness and treachery of Ricardo Lamadrid's nature, and knew, too, that in his present state of mind he would not hesitate to commit murder.

She crossed the floor softly, and drew aside the draperies from the window. Her heart gave a bound, then stood still an instant. For Fairfax Marmion was in the library of his home, sitting in a large chair under the lighted gas jets, his hands clasped behind his head, his figure motionless, his face grave and thoughtful. Margaret watched him in breathless silence. What a target he would be!

Presently she saw him rise to his feet and come leisurely toward one of the windows. For a moment he stood gazing meditatively out into the moonlight. A short time after, he glanced up at the window, where she stood, in the shadow of the room, and a

look of ungovernable emotion passed over his features. Then he drew the blind down and shut out the tender eyes that he could not see.

When Margaret turned from the window a new expression was on her face. She walked slowly back to the bed, and gazed once more at the sleeping child. She drew the silk coverlet over him and kissed him on the mouth. She rang the bell that communicated with her maid's room, and an instant after the maid rapped lightly on the door and entered softly.

"He is asleep," Margaret whispered, holding her hand up warningly. "Get me my cloak, Bertha, and then come and sit here till I return."

She would let no one take charge of the child when she was at liberty. Little Jim and she were inseparable; in truth, they had been parted rarely since his birth.

Margaret took the wrap from the girl and went into the hall, carefully closing the door of the room behind her. She leaned over the heavy oak balustrade and listened attentively. Everything was quiet below,

neither loud talking nor boisterous laughter greeted her.

She passed quickly down the stairs and walked quietly to the dining-room, pausing a moment on the threshold. It was later than she thought; the place was deserted and in perfect order. The guests had evidently taken their departure, and the servants had been dismissed. She went softly into the drawing-room and glanced hurriedly round. Her husband was stretched at full length upon the low couch, his face ghastly, his breathing labored and irregular, one arm thrown out from his body, the hand that rested on the soft carpet clasping a small bottle. Margaret stood erect, as if petrified, gazing at him with loathing and contempt. At length she turned from the recumbent figure, and her eyes sought the cabinet where she had placed the pistol. She drew back with surprise, then went quickly toward it. The heavy glass doors were shattered in a thousand pieces and the pistol had been removed.

Margaret no longer wavered. She went

into the hall, grasped her long white cloak with trembling hands from the back of a chair where she had placed it, and threw it hastily round her bare shoulders. There was no time for thought. It might be the one instant of her freedom. She gathered the rich folds of her dress in her hand, opened the front door, and stole like a spirit into the night. A tiny veil of finest gauze covered the face of the moon, and hid her golden witchery. Margaret moved on with a noiseless step until she stood in front of the Queen Anne cottage; here she paused, her hand upon the gate. It was only a moment, however, before she walked swiftly up the stone sidewalk leading to the house, and knocked lightly on the door.

Almost instantly she heard footsteps, and Fairfax Marmion, in a dark-blue lounging jacket, and with a half-smoked cigar in his hand, opened it and looked into the night. Suddenly the moon escaped from the delicate cloud that held her captive, and fear and consternation sprang to his eyes as he caught a glimpse of Margaret's phantom-

like figure and the gleam of her burnished hair in the moonlight.

“Is your mother here, Fax?” she said softly.

“No, she is at George’s.”

“No matter,” she answered wearily, “I must speak to you.” He did not say a word. He clasped her hands, drew her into the hall, and closed the door.

FRAGMENT VI.

LOVE IS A KEEN REGRET.

MARGARET leaned against the door and closed her eyes.

“Margaret! Margaret! What is it?” he cried sharply. “Are you ill! You are hurt! For God’s sake speak to me!”

“Nothing is the matter with me,” she said mechanically, opening her eyes and gazing at him in a queer, dazed way, “I am all right now. I was faint for a moment. It is nothing. No, I cannot stay,” she said, as he turned toward the library-door; “nor can I sit down,” she added, as he pushed a chair toward her. “I came to put you on your guard—to warn you, Fax.”

“To warn me!” he repeated incredulously.

"Yes, to warn you. Your life is in danger. I am afraid you will be shot. It sounds melodramatic and absurd, doesn't it? But Mr. Lamadrid has been incensed against you ever since the day he saw us together in the church. He has sworn to kill you. Love is unreasonable, you know, and he is so passionate and hot-headed, so irrational and impetuous. And how ludicrous it seems when one knows the true state of affairs. Is it not so?" She looked at him with a bright smile.

He felt instinctively how carefully she was guarding her unhappiness from him.

"Margaret," he said, in a low, tense voice, "I know how cruel your husband is to you. Let me help you if I can."

"You know!" she breathed.

"Yes, little Jim told me the day he came to see me. He told me of the hideous tortures you have been subjected to by this wretch."

"But the child knew so little," she whispered, with startled eyes.

"So little! In heaven's name, what have you undergone? So little! Why, the

words of the child are driving me mad. They are killing me. I have not slept since that day."

She sank to the low chair, her cloak falling from her white throat in a mass at her feet; she covered her face with her hands.

"You must forget what the child said, Fax," she whispered, a sob in her voice.

"I cannot, unless you will tell me the words weren't true."

"Do not ask me. What difference does it make? Why should you care? Why should anyone care?" Her voice was low and bitter.

He took a step toward her, then stood still. Love was on his face as he gazed at her in her wretched despair. She was so lovely in her priceless splendor, yet so pathetic with it all, that she seemed to him like an uncertain vision in a dream. A sharp pain contracted his heart.

He answered resolutely: "I care because I love you with all my heart and soul. I have loved you always. Let me help you for this reason, and for the sake of the friendship you once felt for me."

She was silent.

"You don't care for this cur?" he questioned, under his breath.

She raised her eyes to his. "I do not. I have neither love nor respect for him. But this does not alter the fact that he is my husband, and the father of my child." For a moment she looked at him fixedly, a strange expression in her face.

"You loved me before you went away?" she questioned slowly.

"God alone knows how fondly I loved you then, or how immeasurable is my devotion for you now. For your love I would give up everything in this world, and the hope of life beyond. I have given you my love entire. It is burning my heart to ashes."

"You loved me, Fairfax Marmion!" she exclaimed, her voice vibrant with feeling. "You loved me, and did not speak! You loved me, and left me without a word! You call that love! A man's love, perhaps—a woman's love, never!"

"Oh, Margaret! I was a penniless dog. You were born for something better than I

could give. The world's choicest treasures were meant for such as you, nature never intended that you should be poor. I could not spoil your life; your happiness was too dear to me."

She sighed, and looked at him sadly.

"When I left home, Margaret, I went to make a fortune. I was filled with a keen desire to make a lot of money and return to you; for I hoped, yes, almost believed, that you were not indifferent to me. And the dream of my life had been to call you my wife. But from the first everything went against me. Everything I touched went to pieces; every step I took fate was against me, absolutely against me. The first few years were wretched ones, filled with hardships and failures, with heartaches and disappointments, at times unbearable.

"And then one day, Margaret, I heard you were married, and so I gave up; you had slipped from me. I no longer cared for money. I decided that life wasn't worth living, and that money wasn't worth the struggle it took to obtain it. Shortly after, I had a po-

sition offered me. It was coupled with a good salary, and I accepted it. So I have lived and slaved, and saved a few paltry dollars. And through it all you have been the one woman on earth to me; nor will there be another; and there has never been a time when I would not willingly die for you."

"Fax," she whispered, very low, "I loved you well in those days. And what happy days they were! You did a cruel thing when you left me without one word. I was proud, and my heart was rejected! Think what that meant to me! Ah, Fax, you crushed me cruelly!"

He recoiled, as if she had struck him. "Margaret, do not speak so; you are killing me." He looked at her with a white, set face.

"Love is the only thing," she continued sorrowfully, "the only thing in this sad old world. Everything else is nothing, nothing. What does affluence amount to? I am as fond of luxury as anyone in this wide world, and yet without love it is a hollow mockery. Of what moment the costly clothes and priceless jewels, the luxurious

living-place, with its retinue of servants—yes, all the treasures that wealth can give, in comparison to what is gone. What would they be worth to you, Fax?”

“Nothing,” he said wretchedly.

“Ah, Fax! no one will ever love you better than I did in those days.”

There were haggard lines around his mouth as he looked into her sad face.

“Margaret, you must forgive me,” he cried passionately.

“I do forgive you.”

“And have you no love in your heart for me now?” he asked hoarsely.

The color faded from her face and left it whiter than her dress. “It is too late now. I could not speak to you as I have spoken to-night, were that not so. We are far from our young love now. How quickly we grow old, Fax. Surely, time flies like a bird on the wing. No, it is not for myself I sorrow, but for a fairer, younger, happier Margaret.” Her clear, grave eyes met his.

“Margaret, my dear, dear love—my only love! I see it plainly now. I have ruined

two lives. It is all my fault, darling; a horrible mistake. But, believe me, I knew you loved wealth, and I had absolutely nothing."

"We could have gotten along some way," she said pathetically.

"Oh, I see it clearly, Margaret! It was a fearful mistake, a fearful mistake." He drew back a little, passing his hand before his face. "I am so miserable, so unutterably wretched," he groaned.

She looked at him. Her eyes were dim.

"You must try to forget it, Fax. You did it for the best—for my sake. You thought I'd be happier, and you did not know how it would end."

"I did not," he answered, "and God knows I have repented."

"Our friendship is left," she said, smiling frankly, "is it not?"

"It is, I hope. And you will let me help you, Margaret? I must help you. Have you ever thought of leaving him?"

"Yes, I have thought of it. Once I was bitterly opposed to divorces. I thought they were against heaven's laws. But

lately I scarcely know what to think. All my opinions seem to have undergone a change."

"It would be blasphemy to think God ever meant you to stay there," he said with vehemence. "A divorce is but justice."

"Perhaps," she replied. "Nevertheless, I'd rather go away quietly; that would be best. But he will never consent to a separation of any kind; he will do some dreadful thing first. Oh, you don't know him!" She clasped her hands tightly, and her voice was filled with desperation. "My life is a hideous nightmare. Think what little Jim sees and hears every day. It cuts me to the heart. I don't know what to do. And yet," she added sadly, her voice growing low and natural, "if I had been a different woman he might have been a better man."

"Never!" he exclaimed quickly. "Why, he is so base his own child dislikes him."

"Don't!" She raised her hand, as if to ward off a blow. "I cannot bear it."

"Margaret," said Marmion, in a firm voice, "listen to me. Let me go to a law-

yer to-morrow, and lay the matter before him. I am sure he will show you how a separation can be obtained. You owe this to yourself and child. It has gone too far; for any reason whatever you are wrong to bear such treatment."

She shook her head sadly, and rose to her feet.

"Don't you think I am right, Margaret?"

"You don't understand, Fax. He will never, under any conditions, agree to a divorce. You don't know his disposition."

"He will be compelled to."

"Ah! you do not know him, Fax." She smiled oddly. "He will stop at nothing. I must not anger him." She turned from Marmion, and walked toward the chair where he had thrown her cloak. She picked it up and started toward the door.

He was burning with suppressed emotion. The fear of losing her goaded him to madness, and his prisoned love burst forth tumultuously and carried him off his feet. His habitual composure was gone, and he sprang toward her and drew her to

him fiercely. "You are mine, now, Margaret! Nothing can ever take you from me. Mine forever and forever; yes, through all eternity! You are mine before there was a world, and you will be mine when it has passed away."

As she strove to draw herself away from him, he held her yet more tightly.

"No, you can never go back, never leave me again! I dare not let you go; the risk is too great! Heaven only knows how my heart is starving for you, darling! I love your eyes, your hair, your dear, dear hands! Oh, I love everything about you, Margaret! How can I ever make you understand how I love you?"

His arms relaxed, and she drew back from him, and put her hands over her face. He pressed nearer and bent his head close to hers, his words coming like a flame:

"This very night, my love, we will go. We are still young, there are years of happiness before us, the past is gone forever; that we cannot help; but the present and all the days to come are our own, if we only take them."

And still she was silent, her face hidden by her hands.

He could hear his heart beating and feel his temples throbbing. The diamonds on her fingers flashed yet more brightly; for her hands were trembling with agitation.

"I cannot live without you! Oh, Margaret, I have suffered so!" he pleaded, a sudden soft sadness in his voice. "It is life and death to me. Only say that you love me! Surely such love as yours cannot be dead!"

She stepped back, and, raising her head, stood looking at him, pity, sorrow, and reproach blended in her pallid face.

"No, I do not love you," she said slowly. "The time for love is past and gone; I have sterner things to think of."

Her words cut like a knife, and brought him back to earth. His dark eyes were fixed on her with eloquent despair.

"I am mad! Forgive me. I am unworthy to breathe the same air as you. I despise myself as much as you do me."

"I do not despise you. You were mistaken about my feelings, that was all."

Her voice was cold and distant, and he felt as if he had never heard it before. He knew, too, that he had wounded her irreparably. He dropped his head wearily, walked to the end of the hall, and sank upon the divan near the stairway, his head resting upon his hands.

Margaret followed him and laid her hand upon his heavy dark hair.

He trembled at her touch.

"Do not feel so," she said sadly. "We have been friends all our life, Fax, and we must be friends now."

"I don't see how you can say that, Margaret. How can you?"

She did not answer immediately, but stood looking down at him silently.

"Let us think no more of it, Fax. I have forgotten it already," she finally said with a smile.

"I realize," she continued presently, with great earnestness, "that my life is becoming more complicated every day. I am in a fearful position. If I remain there, what will become of Jim? If I leave, there will be a dreadful fight and the scandal that is

ever attached to a divorce. It is hard; yes, very hard."

"Margaret, I would give my life to help you."

"I know it, Fax, and I thank you."

"Words are meaningless, Margaret."

"Between friends," she said with sincere trustfulness, "they are not needed. You are the only friend to whom I can turn." She leaned against the stairway and clasped her hands.

At last he raised his head and met her steadfast eyes; met them with a quiet air of courage, that she knew so well, and that was typical of his strong character. He was calm, and, excepting his pale face, there were no outward traces of the fierce struggle within.

"Sometimes I think I will take Jim and go away secretly. But where could I go? And then there would be the haunting dread of discovery."

"No, I wouldn't do that," said Marmion decisively. "You must get a legal separation."

"I have a strange feeling, an oppressive

weight, an indefinable fear of something, I know not what." Her voice broke, and was filled with agitation; she pressed her hands against her heart.

Marmion looked at her gravely. "Your fears are groundless, Margaret. You have gone through so much it has made you morbid. You must obtain a separation from this fiend. You *shall* get it. I know that you can get a divorce. There isn't a court in the land but what will grant it." He paused a moment, then said quickly: "Why not have your husband arrested for cruel treatment? Curse him! I'd like to kill him!" He clenched his hands and a murderous light leaped into his dark eyes.

"No, no, you mustn't say that," she said fearfully. "Promise me that you will keep out of his way."

"Why should I keep out of his way? I don't fear him." His tone was hard and stern. "My life is valueless to me. It would afford me intense satisfaction to kill him." He turned his head to avoid meeting her eyes.

"Fax, you are stronger than that; don't talk so."

"You overestimate my strength," he said coolly.

"Fax, you don't know what a wicked, daring man he is. Promise me to be careful. That was what brought me here to-night. Oh, try to realize how serious it really is! What more can I say?" she asked entreatingly.

He was touched by her pleading voice. "Margaret," he said slowly, looking toward her again, "I promise you that I'll do nothing rash. I would be mad to do a thing like that now. I fully realize that your name is at stake. It is infinitely harder for me to keep my hands off him than it would be to shoot him like a cur. However, my cooler judgment tells me that such an act on my part might hurt you. Your husband will give you a divorce; the law will compel him to do so." He stopped an instant, then added hurriedly, "Notwithstanding this, if the law refuses to set you free, God grant that I may be the one to do it."

"What right have you to think of such a thing?" Her voice was cold and distant again, and fell on him icily.

"None whatever," he said sadly. "I have sacrificed all rights to your friendship."

"Fax," she pleaded earnestly, and her words were low and soft. "Do you want to make me more unhappy than I am? Don't you know that, whatever else he is, still he is Jim's father, and if you should harm him in any way, or he should try to injure you, such a course could not but bring disgrace upon the child."

"You are right, Margaret, you are always right. Your will is my will," he said with bowed head.

"You *are* strong, Fax. I depend on you."

He sprang to his feet and stood beside her, looking down into her face. "God forgive me, Margaret, if I have hurt you this night. I hope I may never see the day when I shall add to your sorrows. And there will be no tragedy," he said, with a voice full of confidence. "He is a treach-

erous coward at heart—you need not fear him. I am going to a lawyer to-morrow. May I, Margaret?”

“No, if anyone consults a lawyer, I will be the one. But I must think it all over—yes, I must think it all over,” she repeated slowly.

“You and little Jim come here,—to this house,—and be under mother’s protection,” he urged strongly.

She shook her head.

“I will leave the country, if I have offended you beyond pardon. I will write for her to-night. Mother will advise you, Margaret. She will be a truer and better friend to you than I’ve ever been.”

She did not answer; but she handed him her cloak, and he wrapped it tenderly round her.

She held her hands out to him, and he clasped them between his strong palms.

“Good-night, Fax,” she said softly, “I will see your mother when she comes home. She can help me, I am sure. She is a dear little thing; I have often watched her from

my window, and have wished many times she would come to see me."

"Oh, Margaret! if she had only known you cared——"

"Hush! I understand," she said.

"You are not afraid?" he asked, his hand on the door knob.

"No, I am not afraid," she answered, with a bright smile.

"Let me go with you as far as the gate."

"It is not best," she said softly.

Before he realized it, she had slipped from his side and passed out of the house and glided swiftly across the street.

Once she turned and looked back at him, and the moonlight fell upon her with a divine softness; in that moment the sadness vanished from her face, and the joy and happiness of other years shone there.

FRAGMENT VII.

FOR A CONSIDERATION.

RICARDO LAMADRID knew that his wife wanted to leave him. He would not consent to a divorce; he had settled that in his own mind, once and for all. It would be easier to move heaven or earth than to change him on that point. And, after the threats he had made, he did not believe she would undertake to obtain a legal separation. But he was dogged by a fear that she might take the child and leave him. She was different from what he had ever known her; there was a something hovering round her that he could not understand.

To be sure, for the greater part of the time, he guarded Margaret and the child zealously. But even so, there were hours

when he was compelled to relax his vigilance, and, aside from this, it was extremely wearing on his sensitive nerves to be harassed in such a way.

Lamadrid was not a dull man. On the contrary, he was a man of keen perceptions, and he realized fully the high standard of Margaret's nature, and rightfully judged that the child was responsible for her desire to leave him. So, after due deliberation, he had determined upon a plan, which he hoped to have carried out by a man in whom he had perfect confidence.

When the plan had shaped itself, and taken firm root in his mind, he invited Jack Storey to dine with him. Storey had frequently done so; sometimes at the club, sometimes at his home.

No one ever knew exactly what Jack Storey's line of business really was, even those he had assisted in various ways were at a loss about the matter, but it was tacitly understood that he would do anything for money when hard up, and as hard up was his normal condition, he was nearly always open for business. Moreover, he had the

appearance of a gentleman, and was not hard to approach.

He was generous when he had money, spending it like a prince, and he expected his associates to be the same when he was short of funds, and he did not hesitate to tell them so. He had a strange nature, somewhat like a kaleidoscope in its endless angles and changes.

On this evening, when he dined with Lamadrid, there were no other guests present, and at the close of dinner Margaret excused herself, and went to Jim's room, her husband having graciously acceded to her wish.

Strange to say, the dinner had been rather a pleasant one. Lamadrid, for a reason known to himself alone, had partaken sparingly of wine, and to Jack Storey wine was as water.

At his host's desire, Storey followed him into a small apartment adjoining the drawing-room, which was Ricardo Lamadrid's private den.

The room was furnished with several leather chairs and a lounge, a large rug of

foreign manufacture on the polished floor, and a round table under the chandelier, with cards and poker chips scattered on its surface. Near at hand was a smaller table, laden with decanters, glasses, and cigars.

Storey sauntered over to the centre of the room, and, after lighting his cigar, stood toying with the poker chips. Every little while he bent his head to catch the perfume from the white carnation in the lapel of his coat. He was the picture of health: about twenty-eight or thirty years old, of medium height, with a bold, fearless face, gray eyes, dark hair, tinged slightly with silver, and a great deal of color in his cheeks. His demeanor was marked by a breezy air, and he was well dressed and always at his ease.

"That was a good dinner, Ricardo." He looked at his host and smiled. His smile was extraordinarily brilliant, and his soft, drawling voice pleasant and seductive. "An excellent one," he continued. "I've got a touch of indigestion; have an idea it was the salad. However, it was worth it. Where'd you get the terrapin?"

"Baltimore."

“To be sure, might have known it: a regular Chesapeake aristocrat. Good things to eat, accompanied by a dash of sparkle, go a long way to compensate a man for living.”

Lamadrid drew a chair close to the table and threw himself into it. After a few moments he approached the subject uppermost in his mind. Gradually he unfolded his plan, until there was no mistaking his meaning. Indeed he need not have been so explicit—his companion was keen after a scent.

Jack Storey wheeled a chair close to the table and sat down. He gathered the cards up in his hands; he did not answer; but shuffled and reshuffled the cards, and finally started to deal them. Lamadrid shoved them roughly away and tapped the table impatiently with his fingers.

Storey went on dealing the cards, with a good-natured smile. “I just want to see what I’d get if we were playing.” He turned them over. “Ah! a bobtailed flush. One card, please. Thanks. And still a bobtailed flush,”

Suddenly he threw the cards down and pushed his chair back from the table. "When do I get the consideration, if I undertake the thing?"

"Whenever you wish it," his companion said curtly.

Storey leaned forward and rested his elbows on the table, his chin in the palms of his hands.

"Let me see, I must have a clear understanding of the case. You want me to take the child to Spain and keep him there till you send me word to bring him back again."

"Speak lower."

"You want the whole thing invisible to the casual observer; sort of a sleight-of-hand business—now you see the boy, and now you don't."

"Exactly."

"In plain language, the boy is to be kidnaped—gotten out of the way, so to speak."

"Will you do it?"—in piercing tones.

"Will I do it?" he said, with a low laugh.

"Will a starving man refuse bread? Still,

I tell you frankly, I don't much fancy the job. I've done a good many shady things in my life; have helped a score of honorable gentlemen rise to the occasion, when fate demanded that they should. I'm not the man to be squeamish about small things; you know that, Cardo, my friend. But I've never yet had the extreme felicity of separating a mother and a child."

Lamadrid scowled heavily, and his jovial companion paused a while, as he blew the clouds of smoke from his mouth and watched them circle gracefully above his head.

"Ah, Cardo! if only a fellow didn't have a mother himself! That's what plays the deuce with us, isn't it?" He laughed lightly. "Nevertheless, I'm beastly hard up, and then I might not get the chance again to exercise my powers in that direction. And such a mother! And such a child! But such a consideration; that's the sticker! Enough to retire on, and be happy."

"Hold your tongue!"

He paid no heed to his companion's

words; in fact, he seemed to be having a remarkably pleasant time.

“Easy work and good pay. Risk slight and penalty doubtful, I believe.”

Ricardo Lamadrid, reaching out his hand, took a decanter from the small table and poured out some Scotch whisky into one of the glasses and gulped it down. He pushed the decanter toward Storey; but his companion did not touch it.

“I’ve never had any particular calling; that is to say, no legitimate business. I’m what might be called an undertaker. An undertaker of peculiarly difficult work. I bury the living, and not the dead, so to speak.”

His host took another drink, rose from the table and threw himself into a large easy-chair. He stretched his legs out comfortably at full length, laid his head back, and closed his eyes. He himself was morose and silent, though he did not in any great degree resent his companion’s off-hand manner or his extreme familiarity.

Storey rose from his chair, thrust his

hands into his trousers pockets, and walked up and down the room.

"Yes, old man, with me the lack of money is the root of all evil. You, I suppose, have found it in direct opposition. With money I'm a good representation of a man moseying along the strait and narrow way. Without money I'm——"

"What's the use of talking so much devilish nonsense?"

"Heavens, Cardo! but you are getting to be a pleasant comrade! You're one man in a million. At least," he added apologetically, "I hope you are."

"I'd like to wipe you out of existence."

"Of course you would." Storey smiled. "But I guess you won't cut me off in the flower of my youth and beauty, especially since I intend to render you so sublime a service. And dying's the last thing I'm going to do—the very last." He paused to relight his cigar, then continued: "Look here, old man, you're indulging in too much fire-water and patronizing the little god of forgetfulness too often. You're not like yourself, my boy. Listen to this,

‘Look not upon the wine when it is red’; or, better still, ‘Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.’” His tone was bantering, and he leaned against the wall and looked at his host.

“Fool! You’re a good one to preach!”

“I’m glad you appreciate the fact,” Storey answered glibly, studying the toe of his shoe. “You see, I know whereof I speak. I find in my business I’ve got to be sober, industrious, and dishonest.” He laughed a careless, musical laugh. “My patrons demand these three qualities. In reality, they are essential to success in ‘most all callings in this transitory life. Seems to me it’s awfully hot in here. What do you say to having a window open?” He did not wait for a reply, but lowered one of the windows.

“There, that is fine! Nothing like fresh air. Do you feel that breeze?”

He came back where Lamadrid was reclining, and sat on the edge of the table.

“I’m in earnest about it though, Cardo; you ought to reform. Let opium and drink

alone. You're undermining your health. Give them up."

A sarcastic laugh greeted him. "I'll be hanged if I do."

"That may happen in any event," said Storey, looking at him sympathetically. "'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour.' 'The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' That was a great saying of my dear old daddy's." A grave shadow flitted across the careless face; only an instant, however, was it there. For he started to sing, in a remarkably sweet and tender voice, part of an old song:

"Kathleen Mavourneen ! the gray dawn is breaking,
The horn of the hunter is heard on the hill ;
The lark from her light wing the bright dew is
shaking,
Kathleen Mavourneen ! what, slumb'ring still ?

"Oh ! hast thou forgotten how soon we must sever ?
Oh, hast thou forgotten this day we must part ?
It may be for years,——"

Suddenly he broke off and said quickly:
"How am I to get the child?"

“That is your business, not mine; what the devil do you think the money’s for?”

“Ah, to be sure! Well, I thought perhaps you might offer a suggestion, or something. However, no matter; I’ll try my hand at it. I’ll abduct him in style—try to please everybody. And I pledge you my word of honor not a hair of his bonny head shall be hurt.”

He walked over and poured a very small quantity of brandy in a glass, and raised it in his hand; “Let him drink and forget his poverty and remember his misery no more!” He took a small swallow, and stood holding the glass in his hand.

“Is that from Shakspeare or the Bible? How those old saws do stick to a fellow. Everything I want to say someone else has said before I was born, and as they have invariably used my exact words, I blush at their affrontiveness.” He twisted his mustache thoughtfully.

“When do you want us to decamp?”

“Day after to-morrow.”

“Too sudden. What’s the rush?”

“Day after to-morrow or not at all. I’m not here to give explanations.”

“Nor I to receive them. Very well; day after to-morrow,” he said airily. “Here’s to a safe journey!” He finished drinking the brandy and set the glass down upon the table.

“When and where can I see you to make final arrangements?”

“To-morrow afternoon, three o’clock—at clubhouse.”

“I’ve got an infernal lot of creditors on my track, too, Cardo; don’t forget that when you come.”

His companion looked at him contemptuously and shrugged his shoulders. “There’ll be none you can’t settle with when I get through with you.”

“Don Ricardo Lamadrid, you’re a black-guard.”

Storey uttered these words as softly and as soothingly as if he had said, “You are an angel.”

His manner of expression pleased his host, and he laughed aloud. “You are a knave, Jack.”

“A good pair to draw to; and honors are easy, I believe.”

Lamadrid's spirits were rising. Storey always had a strange attraction for him. It was his cheerful candor, perhaps, he found so refreshing.

“What do you say to a game of poker?” he said, with some animation.

“That's for you to say.”

“Well, draw up.”

They took their places at the table; Storey picked up the cards, and his companion stacked the chips.

“If this is for money, you'll have to make an advance,” said Storey.

“By Jove, that's exciting, I must say; play for my own ducats!”

“It's agreeable to me, if no one else objects. And you'll have an exciting time keeping them, I'll warrant, if my good luck hasn't deserted me. Stake me, Ricardo, and may I never regret it.”

It was late when the game ended, but Jack Storey was fresh as the morning dew when he finally bowed himself away, with a light laugh and a cheery “good-night.”

FRAGMENT VIII.

A RECONNOISSANCE.

AT ten-thirty the following morning Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid was reviewing his troops. His wooden soldiers, with their bright red uniforms and expressionless faces, were arrayed systematically at one end of the roomy porch, and he stood before them, his head and shoulders thrown back, in glorious apparel. He had on a red coat trimmed with gilt buttons; a Napoleonic hat, decorated with a waving plume, sat jauntily on his brown hair; and he was armed with a small wooden musket, that he was changing from one position to another with wonderful dexterity: "Present arms! Carry arms! Shoulder arms! March!"

He gave the commands in a ringing

voice. When he cried "March!" he shouldered his musket, wheeled round, advanced grandly with military precision to the other end of the porch, and then back again with soldierly step to his little regiment. This manoeuvre he repeated a number of times. So interested had he become in his play, that he did not see a swinging figure cross from the opposite side of the street and approach the house. The man's gray eyes scrutinized the premises before he let his gaze rest curiously upon the child.

At once he became an interested spectator. He could not see the wooden soldiers, but he heard the words of command from the little boy, and he smiled to himself.

He watched him for a short time, one hand resting on the iron gate, the other twirling his mustache. Finally he accosted the child. "Come over here, Muggins, I want to ask you some questions."

His voice was low, but far-reaching and distinct.

The boy looked quickly up, but did not

answer. He turned back to his patient soldiers, apparently paying no attention to the interruption. But a moment after his command "Break ranks!" rang out on the air. Then he wheeled, marched to the middle of the porch, wheeled again, and came down the stone steps, then down the broad stone sidewalk leading to the gate, and, at last, when within several feet of the man, who was lounging over it, he called in a commanding voice, "Halt!" and stood leaning on his musket.

The man looked at him, a gleam of fun in his eyes. "What do you call that, my friend?"

"I'm Napoleon Bonaparte."

"Well, how're Josephine and the folks?"

"Oh, I guess they're well. I think they are."

"That's right, Napoleon, don't commit yourself. But where did you get your fine clothes? Not in this country, I'll stake my pile on that."

"This is my soldier suit," the child answered proudly. "My mother made the hat, and I guess she bought the coat,

and Santa Claus brought me the gun and the soldiers. Do you want to come in?"

"No, I haven't time. Is Mr. Lamadrid at home?"

"No, he isn't."

"That's good," his companion answered lightly, "a man can go home when he can't go any place else. Is Mrs. Lamadrid home?"

"Mrs. Lamadrid's my mother—she's upstairs. Do you want to see her?"

"No; not particularly. You'll do just as well." He took a package of cigarettes from his pocket and put one between his firm, even teeth. He held them toward the boy. "Have a smoke?" he asked, scowling his brows good-naturedly.

The child drew back a step, then said soberly: "No, I can't smoke cigars."

"These are not cigars, they're cigarettes—lots more fun than cigars."

"Well, I can't smoke them any way," the boy answered.

"You have my letter of condolence." He put the package in his pocket.

The boy came a step nearer. "I can smoke a pipe, though," he said.

The man laughed and shook his head. "Oh, see here, now! you're joking."

"No, I'm not. Honest! My pipe's a clay pipe and I smoke tea-tobacco. I've got a little sack, with a string that pulls up, to put my tea-tobacco in. And I've got a lovely silver match-box filled with tooth-picks to light my pipe with. Tom's got a pipe, too." He came closer to the fence. "And he's got a sack of real tobacco, and really truly matches. His pipe smells—mine don't," he added regretfully.

"That's too bad," the man said with a rueful air.

"Mother says I'm a Pretender."

The man pushed his hat on the back of his head, and blew the smoke in wreaths from his mouth.

"I think she might say it with safety."

"Tom and I used to have good smokes together, and talk over old times. Tom's got lots of old times. I used to talk to him when he was doing his work. He'd take me out to the barn with him; but Don Ri-

cardo said I mustn't associate with Tom. He says he isn't a gentleman; and I don't go any more. Tom said he knew it wasn't seemly. Mother says Tom's a gentleman at heart, though, and I must always be kind to him." Suddenly the boy raised his eyes to his companion's face. "Are you a gentleman at heart?" he asked earnestly.

The man laughed and tossed his cigarette into the street.

"Faith, I don't believe anyone could accuse me of such a thing," he said gayly. "I'm a gentleman at large, if you must know." He paused a moment, then said softly: "See here, Napoleon, wouldn't you like to go with me and get some candy? I'll bring you home in a jiffy."

The boy shook his head. "I can't."

"Why not? I'll get you a great big bag full." His voice and manner was very winning. "Why can't you go?"

"I promised my mother I wouldn't go out of the yard; that's the reason I can't."

"Oh, pshaw! Your mother won't care. It 'll only take you a minute. Don't you want to go?"

"Yes, I want to go. I'll ask my mother."

"No," the man said decidedly, "if you want to go, come on. I can't wait till you ask her."

The boy was obdurate. "Then I can't go. I promised my mother, and we never break our word."

"Do you use the term we as applying to yourself as a high dignitary, or do you mean that your mother as well as yourself—has a large bump of obstinacy? Or maybe you inherit it from your noble father's Spanish ancestors? But no matter, it's all the same. Come, let's go; we can get the candy while we are talking."

"No, I can't go."

"What kind of candy are you specially fond of?"

"I'm specially fond of gum drops. Once I went with Bertha to a store and I bought some out of a tub—they had a tub full. Mother likes chocolate dulce the best. I like gum drops, because they last longer."

"'Linked sweetness long-drawn out,' so

to speak. Come with me, my dear boy, and I will buy you enough gum drops to last you a life-time."

The child raised his gun to his shoulder, but stood still.

"I'd go if I could," he said firmly; "but I can't."

"You could if you would, you mean."

The boy laughed, and shook his brown head. The man looked at him attentively for some time, then changed his tactics.

"Ahem! What would you rather have than anything else in the world; if you could have one wish, what would you take?"

"A steam yacht," the boy answered promptly.

"Now, that is very singular—very. I was just going to say if you'll come with me to get the candy, to-morrow I'll buy you a beautiful steam yacht. You could be the captain. We'd take a run over to Spain, if you say so."

"I couldn't take the yacht. Mother never allows me to take anything from anybody."

"I shouldn't think she'd mind anything so small as that."

The yacht was a great temptation. He turned toward the house. "I'll ask her."

"Stop!" the man said softly. "Come with me first and get the candy. Ask her afterward. Shall I lift you over the fence?"

"No."

The man laughed a quiet, low laugh. "I like your principle, boy; you're a good one. I just wanted to try you, and see what you would do in such a case. You're a stanch little fellow and I like you."

"I like you, too," the child said quickly, with friendly trust.

The man smiled. "By heavens! I believe, if you had given in, I'd 'a' paddled you good." Then he looked at the child sternly, and said, "Don't you ever go any place with anybody except your mother, and don't you take a thing from a living soul, unless she says you may. If you do you'll be the sorriest boy in the world. Would you like to be separated from your mother and never see her again?"

The boy smiled.

"Somebody 'll carry you off sure, if you're not careful."

"I'm not afraid," the child answered fearlessly.

"Neither was Napoleon Bonaparte afraid, but he came to grief just the same. Come here, child," he added kindly. "Come and shake hands with me. I'm going now."

Don Santiago Laurence Lamadrid came close to the high fence, and put his hand through the iron bars.

The man shook it with a great deal of warmth. After that he stood up straight and took an envelope out of his inner coat-pocket. He held it in his hand and gazed impressively at the child. "Will you give this to your mother? Your mother, you understand. No one else. Now, whom is it for?"

"My mother." The boy reached up and took the letter from the outstretched hand above him.

"That's right. Your mother. You wait here till I turn the corner; then you go and give it to her."

“I know my mother ’ll be much obliged to you,” the child said deferentially.

“Don’t mention it, Mr. Bonaparte; I’m sure of that.” He lighted another cigarette. “Well, good-by, and be a good boy.”

Don Santiago clasped the envelope in his hand, and watched the man saunter down the street. As the careless fellow walked along he sang softly to himself a snatch from his favorite song:

“Mavourneen, Mavourneen ; my sad tears are falling,
To think that from Erin and thee I must part :
It may be for years, and it may be forever !
Then why art thou silent, thou voice of my heart ?
It may be for years, and it may be forever,
Then why art thou silent, Kathleen Mavourneen ?”

The child listened to his voice as it grew fainter and fainter; he strained his ear to catch the last sweet notes, after the young man had vanished round the corner. At last, when he could no longer distinguish the soft strain, he turned and ran toward the house, glancing up at the windows of his mother’s rooms, to see if she were visi-

ble. He fairly flew up the stairs, and burst into Margaret's presence excitedly.

She stood before the long mirror, pinning a veil over her face. "Jim dear, get ready now, we're going for a drive. Tell Bertha to put on your blue coat and your other hat."

He hurried toward her. "Mother, a man wanted to give me a steam yacht, but I didn't take it."

"A steam yacht!"

"Yes, a really truly one, to sail on the ocean, and I could be the captain; but I wouldn't take it. I wanted to, mother dear, oh, so much! I'd have taken you for a long sail if I could. You said I couldn't go out of the yard or take things, didn't you?"

Margaret stooped down and put her hands on the boy's shoulders and looked into his face.

"What man, Jim? I don't understand."

"A man down by the fence. A real nice man. I like him very much. He had white teeth and smiled all the time." The boy's face was sparkling with excitement.

Margaret looked at him earnestly.

"He wanted me to go and get candy. I told him I promised you I wouldn't take anything from anybody, or go out of the yard again."

"That's right, dear; I don't wish you to take anything or leave the house without first asking mother. And, Jim dear, I don't like to have you talk to strange men."

"He wasn't strange. He knew you and Don Ricardo, and he seemed to know me."

"Who was it?" She took his flushed face gently between her hands and looked at him closely.

"I don't know his name. I didn't ask him. He gave me a letter for you, though."

"A letter for me!" she exclaimed in amazement, rising. "Are you joking, Jim?"

All this time he had kept one hand carefully behind him, and now he brought the letter triumphantly forward.

"He gave it to me for you. It isn't a joke."

Something made Margaret tremble. She

took the letter over by the window and sat down. The child laid his hat upon the bed and followed her. He leaned against her knee and watched her interestedly. She opened the envelope and drew a piece of paper from it.

“DEAR MADAM: Watch the child. I have been hired to take him away from town. I don’t intend to do any such a thing. However, there may be another candidate for the work. Keep your eyes on him and oblige,

A FRIEND.”

Margaret’s face reddened and grew pale. Her heart was beating rapidly. Was it so bad as that?

Presently she turned to Jim, and said softly, “Don’t you know the man’s name, dear. Think a moment; perhaps you can remember it.”

He shook his head quickly and positively.

Suddenly she bent forward and caught the child to her breast. She held him close and kissed him again and again. She

bowed her head over his and thanked God repeatedly that he was there close to her. And yet she never felt more powerless in her life.

The boy threw his arms round her neck and kissed her. Her manner and the expression of her face startled him.

“What’s the matter?” he asked in a low, wondering voice. “Does your head ache?”

She drew him to her with an ardent movement, bending her head so that he could not see her face.

“Oh, mother! mother! You’re crying.” His mouth quivered. “What makes you cry? Was it bad news in the letter?”

Margaret strove to be composed; she did not wish to give way before him or to frighten him; but her heart tightened.

“Hush, dear, it is nothing! I am not going to cry any more. Only the weak cry, and we are always going to be brave and strong.”

“Well, sometimes I cry, mother, and I’m strong and brave, I think. But the tears come when I can’t help it; but I make them go back, if I can.”

He was trying to console her, and he laid his face close to hers, and reached up and stroked her hair with his plump little hand. "Your hair is awful soft, mother, and sometimes it looks like gold when we're in the carriage. Bertha says mine is going to be black as a crow's, like Don Ricardo's, when I get big. I wish it wouldn't. I'd rather have gold hair. Do you think it will be black, mother?"

"No, dear, I think it will always be brown, just as it is now. Your eyes and hair are like your dear grandfather's. And brown hair is the prettiest of all. Mine will be dark brown, too, some day, I hope."

"Shall we drive, mother dearest?"

Margaret smiled into his questioning eyes.

"Yes, dear, we will; go and get your other coat and hat. Suppose you tell Bertha to bring them in here."

He left the room, but returned almost immediately with the maid, who had his clothes in her arms.

As Margaret took them, the girl's eyes rested anxiously on her altered face.

"Can I do anything for you, Mrs. Lama-drid?" she asked impulsively.

Margaret smiled gravely. "Only my wrap, Bertha, that is all."

"Thank you," she said, as the girl put the lace cape over her shoulders.

"Will that be warm enough? It is chilly out this morning."

"My dress is warm," answered Margaret; "it will be plenty."

"Shall we have a long, long ride, mother dear?"

"Yes, sweetheart, we will have a long, long ride. We will stay until we want to come home."

He hung lovingly onto her hand as they went slowly from the room.

FRAGMENT IX.

THE CONSCIENCE OF A CONSCIENCELESS MAN.

AT the time Ricardo Lamadrid entered a small private room at the clubhouse he fully expected to find Jack Storey waiting for him. But the place was empty, although it was close upon the hour they had agreed to meet. He paced up and down the floor impatiently. His black eyes were clear, his step steady, and his Southern blood hot in his veins. He looked at his watch; it was past the hour for Storey to put in an appearance, and he slipped it into his pocket with an angry oath. He went over by one of the large windows and pushed aside the heavy drapery; he stood looking down into the street.

He watched the people passing by, but his thoughts were occupied with Margaret

and Don Santiago: of how he would soon have the child out of her reach, of how her haughty head would soon be leveled to the dust, of how she would beg for mercy at his feet. It exasperated him beyond endurance—the thought of the proud-spirited woman he had not conquered. His mind was restless as an engulfing wave. His brow knit in a frown and he pressed his teeth against his lower lip. Then he lighted a cigarette, and a grim smile came to his handsome, disagreeable mouth.

Finally he turned abruptly, and was about to leave the room in disgust when a boy came to the door and handed him an envelope. He seized it and tore it open violently. On a small piece of paper, taken from a note-book, were scrawled a few terse sentences. He glanced them over hurriedly:

“Stay where you are till I join you. It is vital that you do so. I have been unavoidably detained, but will be with you in a short time. If you leave you may miss me. My delay concerns our plans.

Order a nice little repast, Cardo. I'd like to have another with you, old man, before I sail the seas over.

J. S."

Lamadrid crumpled the note in his hand and threw it upon the floor with half-closed, gleaming eyes. "To be kept waiting by such an insolent dog!" he muttered, under his breath. He had not tasted wine for hours; he felt the keen necessity of retaining his senses if he were to accomplish his purpose, and yet his high-strung sensitive nerves were giving away, the insatiate desire for artificial vitality was burning him up. It was a grave question with him as to whether he would delay quenching his thirst until he met his cool-headed, bracing friend.

And while he was reading these provoking words, Storey was making his way to the Lamadrid residence. He had, in fact, been in one of the lower rooms in the clubhouse when Lamadrid came to keep the appointment, and he did not send the note to him till he was sure his friend had gone

up the stairs, and into the apartment designated the day before for their place of meeting. Then, having dispatched the message, he passed quietly out of a side door and down the street. He buttoned his coat and walked leisurely along.

Once he stopped at a store and bought a box of candy; and after that was wrapped and handed to him, he bought a flower and fastened it in his buttonhole.

When his card was handed to Margaret she was in the midst of making preparations to leave her home. She had not slept since the strange warning had come into her hands. It had filled her with bitterness; but, at length, this feeling had given way to a strong spirit of resolution. She had no definite plans for the future; she only knew that she was going away with little Jim, and that no one on earth should be taken into her confidence. Her decision to go had given her strength, and she felt a heavy weight lifted from her heart, now that it was all settled and clear in her mind.

She was surprised when Jack Storey's

card was brought to her, and was about to send word that her husband was not home, but her eyes fell upon a few words written below his name, "May I see you a moment, Mrs. Lamadrid?"

There was no mistake as to whom he wished to see. So she hastened down the stairway and into the drawing-room.

Storey was standing with his hat in hand, a healthy glow in his cheeks. He advanced to meet her, with a friendly smile and a warm handshake.

"You are ill, Mrs. Lamadrid," he said quickly, gazing at her white face.

"No, I am quite well, thank you," Margaret answered, with a smile. "Won't you sit down, Mr. Storey. Did you wish to see me?"

"I can't stay but a minute," he said, sitting on the edge of a chair, his body bent forward, and swaying his hat in his hands. He bore himself with unembarrassed grace. "Did you get my letter?"

"Your letter!" she exclaimed, looking at him in great surprise.

"Yes, my anonymous letter," he laughed

amusedly. "Didn't Napoleon give it to you? I'd wager my life, though, he did."

A silence followed, and Margaret's eyes did not leave his face. "Did you write it?"

"Now see here, Mrs. Lamadrid, I did write that letter, and I've been ashamed of it ever since I sent it. I should have come and told you personally what I had to say."

"Where were you to take him?"

"Spain."

"Ah, I understand!" she said slowly. "And how long were you to remain there?"

"Really, Mrs. Lamadrid, I don't know. I am very much in the dark on the subject."

"But it is true," she questioned coldly, "you were asked to do a dastardly thing like that, and you intended to do it?"

"For heaven's sake, don't look that way, Mrs. Lamadrid. Yes, it is true I intended to do it, but it is equally true I changed my mind. I am sure Ricardo is not himself at the present time; he is most unnatural."

"You do him an injustice," she said, smiling slightly.

“Hardly; that would be a difficult thing to do, Mrs. Lamadrid. And yet, on second thought, perhaps I do. I’ll modify my words, and put it in another way—he’s getting ’most too natural for comfort. That’s the truth in a nutshell. However, my idea in coming here was this: I thought if I could put you on your guard and explain to you just how matters stand, and what channel his thoughts are in, why you could sort of smooth things over for a while; he needs to be handled with gloves, you know. He’s a great fellow.” He laughed pleasantly.

Margaret was not looking at him. She gazed straight before her with sad, unseeing eyes.

He half rose in his chair, but she raised her head quickly, and stretched out a detaining hand. “Please don’t go for a moment, Mr. Storey.”

He sank affably back into the chair.

“I was only taking a little exercise,” he said, smiling.

“Why were you selected to take the child?” she asked.

“My taking way, I suppose, had something to do with it; and because that’s the kind of a man I am—there was money in it. It was purely a matter of business with me: a good business proposition, I should say.” He leaned over and rested his arm upon the chair.

“What other family affairs did Mr. Lamadrid discuss with you, Mr. Storey, if I may ask?”

“On my soul and honor, Mrs. Lamadrid, absolutely nothing. But don’t you think yourself, if a man makes a request of that kind, there is a wide range for speculation?” He paused, before adding, “Now, if there is anything on earth I can do for you, why you can count on me. I mean what I say.”

Margaret’s lip curved in scorn. Her proud heart refused to accept the situation as it was. At the same time she could not make herself dislike Jack Storey, though, in her present mood, she could not understand his careless, joyous attitude.

“Probably you think I’ve got lots of

nerve to sit here and talk to you this way, Mrs. Lamadrid."

"I may have had some such thought, Mr. Storey."—She smiled.—"Notwithstanding, I am grateful for your kindness to me. I am deeply indebted to you for the interest you have taken, and I appreciate it." Her manner was very earnest.

"Now that sounds better," he laughed. "I was beginning to be sorry I came. My time is limited; I've got an engagement with a man, and the chief thing I came here to ask you is this, can I be of any assistance to you? Don't hesitate to say so, if I can be."

"No, I believe not, Mr. Storey."

"Of course, Mrs. Lamadrid, I know you think I'm a bad lot,—and that is only another case of a woman's intuition being right,—still, to-day I am honest and frank with you; though, I am free to admit, to be frank and honest is strictly against my principles. A spade's a spade, facts are facts, and until your husband gets over this crazy fit, you had better keep your eye on the child; and I'll take Ricardo

under my wing and try to straighten him out. That is the gist of what I want to say."

Margaret's heart was beating rapidly, yet she smiled and shook her head.

"Mr. Storey, I cannot but feel your anxiety over this matter is unnecessary. It seems incredible that such a thing could happen in a civilized country." She paused, then leaned forward and looked steadily at her companion, and continued impressively, "Nevertheless, I assure you, no one on earth shall separate my child from me." She threw her head back and closed her eyes for a moment. "No one but God."

"Mrs. Lamadrid," he said, in a low voice filled with sympathy and admiration, "I suppose you are right, my fears may be groundless; I cannot say as to that. But I do know I have overstepped the bounds of society in coming here; even so, I hope you will forgive the transgression, for, believe me, it is the first time I have strolled from the broad and pleasant way. I suppose there is a limit to everything. To hold up

an express train is one thing, and to separate a mother and child is another."

He rose and went over to a small table, where he had placed the box of candy when he came in; he touched it lightly with his hand. "Will you give this to Napoleon Bonaparte for me, with my best wishes, and tell him they didn't have any gum drops?"

She rose, and bowed her head in acknowledgment; she rested her arm against the back of the chair.

"Mr. Storey," she said seriously, "I cannot conceive of you doing a dishonorable act. You have taken me so by surprise, I have scarcely known what to say. I am bewildered. Perhaps I have misunderstood you,—perhaps I have taken you too literally,—I hardly know what to think. Of all the men who have come to our home I liked you best; I have had a high regard for you."

"Ah me! you speak in the past tense, Mrs. Lamadrid," he said with a sigh.

"No," she responded quickly, "you mistake me; my opinions are unchanged."

He bowed his head gracefully. "I do

not hold the honor lightly, Mrs. Lamadrid. And for you I shall always cherish a never-fading admiration." Then, with a slight smile and jesting tone, "To serve the queen I will sacrifice my patrimony."

"Perhaps," she went on, "Mr. Lamadrid has influenced you; it may be he has injured you. If so, I am truly sorry."

"You are mistaken," he replied hastily. "Mrs. Lamadrid, you do not know me as I am. I was a fallen angel long before Ricardo crossed my path. I have lived a life such as you, from your nobility of character, couldn't comprehend, if I told you of it. I have been superlatively wild and reckless. There is no low or base thing I have not done." He paused before adding, "And I live with but one object in view; to prevent my mother from knowing me as I am. So far, I think, I have accomplished it."

"You have a mother?"

"The sweetest and dearest in the world. And I do solemnly swear it has not been an easy thing to keep her in happy ignorance, for mother has a legion of kind friends who

would lend her assistance on the slightest provocation. Yes, it has troubled me immeasurably to keep her in the dark—has certainly turned my hair white." He passed his hand tragically over his head. "Such things are enough to make a hair-brush gray. You'd be amused, Mrs. Lamadrid, if you could see me at home." He laughed at the pleasant recollection. "I'm no prodigal son there, but, just the same, they kill the fatted calf whenever I put in an appearance. My father was a minister. I know you guessed as much the first night you saw me, didn't you? And mother did her level best to make one out of me. When I was twelve years old she made me read the Bible through, and commit whole chapters. Why, actually I feel the effects of it even now occasionally, when I'm in the midst of a scientific game of whist. Upon my soul and honor I don't know whether I am playing according to Hoyle or according to Proverbs. I learned to say the Lord's Prayer backward, too, in those days, and after I committed it contrariwise, I never could say it any other way."

"It is hard to believe all you say, Mr. Storey," Margaret said, with a smile.

"Doesn't it seem strange to think I grew up in such surroundings—above comprehension; in truth, quite grotesque? I was one of the choir boys, too, you know. Mother has a ridiculous picture of me taken in my paraphernalia. Why, it is so lifelike, you can almost hear me shouting Onward Christian Soldiers, Marching as to War! Do you remember that hymn, Mrs. Lamadrid?"

"I remember it well," she answered.

"Lead, Kindly Light, is mother's favorite."

"The words are exquisite," she said, "I too am fond of them."

He sighed cheerfully. "Sometimes when I am homesick for my mother and all her goodness, and heartsick for all my own shortcomings and goings, why, I go in my room, lock and bolt the door, shut the windows, and then sing every one of those old hymns I learned when I was a boy. They're fine medicine for remorse."

"Then you do have regrets?" Mar-

garet said. Pity and concern were on her face.

"Regrets? Why, yes, of course I do. Don't you, Mrs. Lamadrid? I suppose everybody has regrets sooner or later, for that matter. 'Tis a life of repentance."

Margaret did not answer. He noted the shadows on her face, and said hastily. "Yes, poor mother thinks I am perfect, to this day. I'd be a villain to undeceive her. I've come to the conclusion that thinking is all there is in this life, anyway. If a person thinks a thing is so, it is true for him or for her, as the case may be, at any rate. Yes, indeed, she will always think I missed my calling. I'll admit, though, at times, her eyes make me feel queer—such beautiful, speaking eyes." He paused, then said quickly, "I trust you will always have that same reverential love for your little Napoleon, Mrs. Lamadrid."

"I hope he will always be worthy of it," she answered.

"Don't get that into your head, Mrs. Lamadrid. No man on earth is worthy of a true woman's love. You live in an at-

mosphere of purity, high above the actual life—sort of in the suburbs, you know, not in the real world. Yes, we're a bad lot; some of us hide our infirmities better than others, but, if we were analyzed, we'd run about the same, I guess. You don't believe it, Mrs. Lamadrid; I can see it in your eyes."

"No, I cannot say I do," she said earnestly. "I scarcely know, Mr. Storey, whether you speak lightly or whether you are serious."

"I was never more serious in my life," he replied.

"Then," said Margaret, smiling sadly, "don't you ever think of what you might have been?"

"Certainly. I shiver when I think of my narrow escape. Honestly, Mrs. Lamadrid, my conscience troubles me little or none to speak of; it never was reliable. And yet, no person on earth has ever gotten more unadulterated bliss, more joyful satisfaction, out of this transitory existence than I have. My creed of life is simplicity itself. In reality, I believe in nothing save the

surety of death, the power of money, the survival of the fittest. And the fittest is invariably the man who has been shrewd enough to accumulate the dollars, and knows how to hold them. I always take off my hat with profound respect to such a man. But how I do procrastinate; and how deucedly brainless I am to keep you standing; and what an idiot to rattle on about myself."

"I prefer to stand," said she, smiling. "And I have been intensely interested in what you have been saying."

"You really must pardon me. Some way you set me to thinking about my home and the past, and all that sort of thing, Mrs. Lamadrid. I cannot remember when I have mentioned it to a soul before. I must be going," he added, moving toward the door, and stopping when nearly there. He looked remarkably serious. "Mrs. Lamadrid, if, on second thought, you come to the conclusion that I can render you a service, call on me. Here is the number of my room." He took a card from his pocket and handed it to

her. "Any word sent there will always reach me." He paused. "Isn't there something I can do, just to prove how deadly in earnest I am? Do try my loyalty and devotion; you see, words are on the bargain counter. What can I do for you?"

Margaret came toward him impulsively, then stopped and said fervently, "Mr. Storey, live as your mother thinks you are."

He threw back his head and laughed aloud. "Mrs. Lamadrid, I'd never 've thought that of you. Still, I'll forgive you; I'm magnanimous enough for that." He laughed softly again. "Pardon me; but it is amusing. However, you may have another wish."

Margaret came close to him and there was a trace of hesitation on her face.

"Then I will ask you one thing more, Mr. Storey, before you go."

"Oh, do, Mrs. Lamadrid!"

"Have you made known your decision to Mr. Lamadrid in regard to not taking——" Her voice faltered.

"No, I haven't told him," he said quickly. "I am to meet him this after-

noon, and I look for unalloyed happiness. To tell the truth, I am supposed to be in the midst of packing my grip."

"Will you keep the peace with him until to-morrow afternoon?" As she spoke her glance sought his imploringly.

His clever gray eyes looked directly into her anxious ones. "Yes, I'll keep the peace with him; most assuredly I will. I'll kill him, if I can't do it any other way. However, he may have changed his mind about the whole affair."

He came and took her hand in his reverently; he bowed low over it and raised it to his lips.

Margaret could not but smile at his manner; it was so absurdly youthful.

After this, he went out of the house speedily—at an unusual pace for him—and hastened to keep the peace with a very unruly subject.

FRAGMENT X.

LOVE IS LOVE FOREVERMORE.

FAIRFAX MARMION never knew who came for him, or how he reached Margaret that night. He was conscious of nothing till he entered the room where she was lying still, with closed eyes; and there was something about her face in repose that shocked him terribly.

On the table, near the bed, a lamp was burning, subdued by a soft shade, and the fitful fire in the grate cast weird shadows around the splendid place. Somewhere in the room there were violets; their fragrance permeated everything. His footsteps made no noise upon the rich carpet, and, as he drew near, the blood left his face, and a chill was on his heart. He stood still as a statue and looked at her despairingly, his

heart in his eyes, his breath quickened. His soul was filled with unutterable anguish; love and regret were slowly stifling him; the room swam before his eyes, and he swayed from side to side. He was thinking of the time when Margaret had loved him, and of all the happiness he had lost. Why was she lying there, with that look?

“Has anything happened? Oh, Margaret, what is it?” His lips were stiff, and the words fell on his ears with a peculiar sound.

When she saw him, a blush mantled her cheeks and caused them to shine with life again. “You are good to come so soon. It must be very late.” Her eyes looked straight into his, and they held and fascinated him strangely.

And as he gazed mutely at her, a great light broke over her face, while into her eyes came a look that set his blood on fire. For, from them shone eloquent, deathless love, with its soft lights and tender shadows.

And yet he stood still, not comprehend-

ing the full meaning of that beautiful expression. He was vaguely wondering how anyone could look into her eyes and doubt the immortality of the soul.

"I love you, Fax," she whispered, holding her arms out to him. "You were right, such love as mine can never die."

Waves of passionate tenderness surged over him, and, with a quick movement, he sprang toward her.

"My darling! my darling!" he cried. "You love me?"

"I have never ceased to love you, you are more than all the world to me." The next instant she was sobbing on his breast, their fast-beating hearts close together, their lips meeting; and Fairfax Marmion and Margaret Lamadrid—thrilled through every pulse of their being by that mysterious kiss of love—forgot everything in the wide world save each other.

"Together! Oh, my darling, together!"

"Together!" she whispered. "What a world of peace in that dear word? It is heaven to be with you, Fax."

"Love is heaven on earth," he said.

“And love is all on earth or in Paradise,” she breathed.

She had given herself to him wholly in this hour—reserve, fear, the past were forgotten.

For a brief space they wandered in heaven's fair garden, with rapture and awe glowing from their eyes. Love had brought to them at last a sad happiness, and they were in the presence of inexorable Fate.

He clasped her close in his strong arms, while she poured out the misery of those sad, uncertain years. Then she lay back on the pillow exhausted, but smiling.

They ceased talking for a while, and the silence was fraught with love and tenderness. Everything was clear between them. No, not everything.

“Margaret! Margaret! My love!” he groaned, and sank beside the bed, bowing his head. “Dear heart, why did I leave you, when you were made for me?”

She passed her hand slowly over his hair. “Don't, Fax! Don't feel so! I am happy

now." She paused a moment, before adding softly, "Ever since I have known your love was mine, I have been happy." She clasped his hand and held it against her heart. "Too happy, I'm afraid. It will be easier for you too, dearest, now that you know you have my heart and love. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, yes, Margaret, your love has given to me a peace that nothing else in heaven or earth could have given. I have suffered everything."

At that instant she moaned, as if in pain. He sprang to his feet: "Margaret! You are in pain! You are hurt, let me go for help! What is it, darling? You must tell me."

"No, no!" she said quickly, but in a low voice, whose tones were growing physically weaker; "give me a little brandy. I am only faint. I want to talk to you, Fax." She smiled. "Don't leave me. The flask is on the dresser."

He opened the window near the bed. The gray dawn was breaking over the distant hills: he could see the dim outline of

the houses; a cold chill was in the air. Not a soul was stirring.

He then went to the dresser and picked up the flask of brandy. It must have been hastily used earlier in the evening; for the silver stopper was missing. There was something so oppressive, so unreal, about it all. He poured out some brandy into a little glass and carried it over to the bed; he raised her in his arms while she drank it.

"Are you hurt? What is it? Tell me, Margaret? How did it happen?" he whispered with shortened breath, kissing her hair. "I must go for help."

"Don't leave me, don't leave me!" She sank back on the bed with paling face; a shiver ran through her.

"Do not speak of it, if it is painful to you," he said quickly. "I will not leave you, darling."

In his heart was deep exultation for her love, but a great ineffaceable fear was also there.

"Not now, dear love," she murmured, clasping her hands tightly. "Let this hour be ours. I have prayed for this hour.

There isn't very much happiness in the world,—only a little for each person,—and yet how desperately we cling to that little. I wonder," she continued softly, "if you will ever know how I have loved you, Fax?"

"And I so unworthy."

"Ah no! you are not unworthy; we have both made mistakes. I have tried so hard to live without you, Fax, but I have never truly lived. And you have suffered, too, I see it in your face." She uttered a soft cry and her eyes filled with tears.

He was silent, and she went on:

"I am not so good as you think. When I told you I did not care for you, it nearly broke my heart—and, Fax—oh, Fax—I would have gone with you, but for Jim. He could not go. It cannot hurt him now. He was all that ever brought me back. Ah, yes! I was very weak; I loved you better than my own soul, and had it not been for him, I would have stayed with you till death separated us. I don't want you to think I was stronger and better than you were; for God knows I was not. And I can

never, no never, tell you the joy it gave me to hear you say that you loved me. Why, the earth seemed changed to me that night. But God will forgive us. The world might not, it is true, but he is merciful, and will understand how hard life has been for us. Yes, it has been very hard."

"Ah, Margaret! sometimes it has been so hard that I have lost my faith in all things."

"Poor Fax! Poor Fax! It will be different now."

For a while she was silent.

"Oh, a child is a mighty power for good," said she. "They hold our hearts in their little hands; their weakness is our strength. And how often we are credited with strength that is not our own. But the heart knows its own failings."

"My darling," he cried. "I did not think of the child! I had forgotten everything in the world but you when I spoke! I would not have asked you to take him, nor yet to have left him. Your life seemed so terrible; little Jim told me so many horrible things. And I had always loved you,

and everything was so dark and hopeless. Believe me, I did not think of him."

"I know it, Fax."

He stooped and kissed her.

"For Jim's sake," she said softly, "what would I not do? You would love him fondly, Fax, if you knew him as I do. He is dear; yes, very dear. I love him so. Oh, he is so high-spirited and affectionate, so loyal, so truthful, and so brave."—Exquisite tenderness was in her words.—"And his admiration for me is a sacred thing."

"Where is he, Margaret?" he asked suddenly. Again he was conscious of the unrealness of it all. Surely he would wake and find it a dream.

"Poor little fellow, he is fast asleep on the lounge, over by the door. When he found out I was hurt, he sobbed himself to sleep. Bertha made him a bed over there. Poor girl! she has been so good to me. I am afraid she was badly frightened. Go over and see how lovely he looks when he's asleep, Fax."

Marmion crossed over to the low couch

and looked down on the sleeping child. He had on his blue silk robe and little slippers. There were a number of down pillows on the couch, and he was lying on his stomach, his face buried among them.

"He's lying on his face, Margaret. I'm afraid he will smother. Shall I turn him over?"

"Oh, he won't smother! Children often sleep that way. But turn him over and kiss him."

Marmion fixed the pillows as tenderly as a woman, and lifted him in his arms, then laid him gently back again.

"Poor little man! he seems to have been having a hard time." He smoothed his hair and kissed him. There were traces of tears on his round cheeks, and his eyelids were swollen. Marmion sat on the edge of the lounge, close to the sleeping child; he leaned back against the cushions, and looked at him thoughtfully.

Suddenly he raised his eyes and a soft exclamation of delight escaped him. Just over where the child was sleeping hung an exquisite painting, in a massive frame. It

flashed on his vision like a dream-face of long ago, smiling down at him, as if a word would waken its sleeping beauty into joyous life. It was radiant with health and happiness—it was the face of Margaret Laurence.

An instant after, that exquisite work of art served only to double his fears, to make his heart beat fiercely, and to turn his face as white as the one on the bed, whose beauty—so changed from that—affected him so unaccountably.

After a pause Margaret said anxiously: “I’m afraid he doesn’t look quite like himself. He had a terrible spell of crying. He rarely cries, but when he does, it nearly always makes him sick. Does he seem feverish?”

“No, he looks very well. As beautiful as a picture. Shall I throw something over him?”

She smiled. “That’s just like you, Fax, you’re so thoughtful. I don’t think he needs anything, though; the rooms are warm. I can’t tell you what a comfort he has been to me. We have only had each

other, and the world is so large. You will love him, Fax?" she questioned slowly.

"I love him now; he is so very like you."

"I wonder what he would think if he knew how weak, how very weak and human I am. Why, he thinks I can do no wrong."

"You could not, Margaret. You might think that you would, but you could not. I know that full well. His confidence and trust are not misplaced. God never made a better woman than his mother." He came back to her side.

"Ah, Fax, how happy we might have been!"

Might have been! Her words were like a stone upon his heart, but he said softly, "We'll be happy, my darling. Nothing shall take you from me."

She smiled sadly and drew his head down close to her face.

"Poor Fax! Poor Fax!"

"Darling, you will soon be well and strong. Happiness is very near us."

"Fax, dear Fax, you will stay with me till the end?"

Till the end! A smiting terror swept over him. What if Margaret were to die!

"Forever!" he said under his breath. Long and passionately he kissed her. "Mine to love and cherish with my life. Oh, my darling, this hour, with the assurance of your love, is worth all the years of my life. If death were the penalty I would take it gladly, rather than not to have lived this night."

Her face was flushed and her eyes had a peculiarly-bright look about them.

He noticed the change with added anxiety. "I am going for a doctor," he said abruptly, in a decisive manner. "I cannot——"

"The doctor was here just before you came. He has gone to see some poor woman's baby; it is dying." Her voice was low, and she paused between every word. "When he comes back he is going to bring another doctor with him. But they cannot help me."

"Don't!" he cried passionately. "In God's name, Margaret, what has happened?"

"Someone is coming now," she whispered softly. "Oh, Fax! I wanted to see you before they came back, and I could not bear to have you know how badly I was hurt. It happened last night. I was unconscious for several hours. When I regained consciousness *he* had gone. I was alone with the servants. Then I sent for you. Indeed, my love, I do not suffer. I am in very little pain now. But the bullet is here and they are going to find it." She pressed her hand to her breast.

Just then someone rapped on the open door, and Bertha entered the room. She had been crying; there were dark circles under her eyes, and her face showed traces of the faithful watch she had kept that dark night. "The doctor is here, he has someone with him," she said in a low tone, as if she could not trust herself to speak.

"Tell them to come up, Bertha," Margaret answered.

"And he has gone! Where?" exclaimed Marmion.

"I don't know," she answered slowly.

“The doctor thinks it was an accident.” She looked at him beseechingly.

Horror was stamped upon his face; but he was unnaturally quiet. “He cannot think so,” he said shortly. “How can he, Margaret?”

“I don’t know,” she said wearily. “He seems willing to think so. Fax, dear Fax!” she whispered with piercing tenderness.

He stood a moment struggling with conflicting emotions. Then he bent and kissed her. Love had conquered; and she knew it.

“I am going to telegraph for my mother, she will be here to night,” he said. “They must wait till she comes. I shall never leave you again, Margaret.”

“Never again,” she repeated.

He passed out the room and stopped to speak to the doctors, who were talking in the hall, their heads close together.

He asked them several questions. They told him an operation must be performed. It was not necessarily fatal, but was dangerous in the extreme. He asked them to

postpone it until his mother reached home, to which they consented.

He turned from their curious eyes, and hurried down the stairway. The front door was open, and he left the house and passed out the gate, glad to feel the breath of morning upon his face. Perhaps he could think now. He went rapidly down the street.

FRAGMENT XI.

THE BLOSSOM FALLS FROM THE STEM.

THE little revolver had accomplished its work, and Margaret's luminous face lay on the pillow, the light slowly fading from it, as the pale glory of the morning star dies in the coming dawn.

Only one short week had elapsed since that last dreadful scene was enacted between Ricardo Lamadrid and his wife. Only one short week since he had seen Margaret stretched at his feet, an ugly wound in her white breast. He had vanished that night, and the darkness had swallowed him up as completely as if the earth had closed over him.

That was a dreadful week. Fairfax Mar-
mion had sent for his mother and she had

come; come from where the artificial jewel of success flashed as the real. He had told her briefly the history of the past few days, and when their eyes met she understood the story of his heart, reading his sorrow at a glance, and her tender heart overflowed with grief for him. And now her little figure vibrated between the great stone house and the Queen Anne cottage; the boy, too, came and went at his own sweet pleasure, and he was happier by far than he had been before in his short life; for he was not conscious of the stealthy shadow that was creeping toward his home.

The doctors gave no hope. It was, at the best, but a matter of a few hours, and no earthly power could save her. At her own request, she was carried from her stately private apartments, where they had borne her that awful night, to the child's little room, where she now lay, on his white bed, pale and motionless.

Marmion was alone with Margaret. He stood beside the bed, and gazed heart-brokenly at her. Her eyes were closed, and apparently she was sleeping—sleep-

ing as peacefully as a child. The suffering was all on his face. She opened her eyes and smiled up at him. "Fax," she said softly and fondly.

"You are in pain!" he said quickly, bending over her.

"No, not in pain, dear Fax, but oh, so tired."

"Where is Jim?" she asked after a pause.

"Mother has taken him out in the yard, to get a breath of fresh air. It is difficult to keep him away from you for long at a time."

"How kind your mother is to him!" She smiled gratefully.

The child's red cap lay on the bed beside her, where he had left it a short time before. She picked it up and pressed it to her lips. "Dear little cap,—dear little boy,—my own sweetheart." Then she fell into silence, gazing at Marmion wistfully.

After a while she broke the stillness: "Fax, I have something to say to you before I go. It will not be long, dear heart," she whispered. "Something tells me that."

His face was racked with emotion. "No,

no, my dearest one! You are better, it cannot be! God will not separate us now!" His voice failed him.

"Poor boy, poor boy! It is going to be so hard, for you. It is of Jim I wish to speak, my poor little sweetheart. You will care for him, Fax. I am afraid he will miss me sadly."

"No, no, Margaret! I cannot live without you. I will not live without you. Let me stand face to face with Ricardo Lama-drid and then let me die." He threw himself beside the bed and encircled her with his arms. She crept close to him, and they were silent for some time. He was striving vainly to gain his self-control.

"Margaret, forgive me. I have given you pain! I will be calm!"

"Oh, my love, it will not be so lonely if you have little Jim. You must take him for your very own, and he will be a consolation, a sweet comfort to you, as he has ever been to me. He will help you so much. Promise me you will live for him."

He drew a chair beside the bed and sat down.

“Is it asking too much, dear? Will he be a burden to you?”

“A burden! Oh, Margaret, your child a burden!”

She smiled. “Then for my sake you will love and cherish him. You will be father and mother to him, and your life will be full. Teach him to be good and brave and true. And when he is older, tell him our sad little story; and he will love you; oh, so dearly!”

“I am not worthy, my darling, of this sacred trust.”

“I only ask for him, my love, that he be like you in all things. God grant it may be so! This house, which is in my name, and my diamonds, will be enough for him. I leave everything to your judgment.” She paused and laid her white hand upon his. “And you will not let him forget me, Fax. The thought of being forgotten is the hardest of all; it is death’s cruelest sting.”

He met her eyes, but he could not answer.

Suddenly her voice sank to an appealing

whisper. "And if his father should try to gain possession of him you will stand between them! Never, oh never, let him have the child!" Her face grew paler yet at the fearful thought.

"I swear that he shall not touch the child while I'm alive."

"I can ask no more." She breathed contentedly. "But he will not come back," she said, "when I am gone; fear will keep him away—he dare not come back. If by any chance, though, he should get desperate and return—for he is very proud of him, yes, very proud of little Jim—I have written the particulars down—you will find them in my desk; this, together with Bertha's word, will be sufficient to——"

"Hang him!"

"*His father hanged!* No, no, not that! I have made this statement to be used as a last resort; there is no bitterness in my heart. But he cannot have my little sweetheart." Her eyes filled with tears.

"Oh, Margaret, my beloved! I will watch the child unceasingly. I will love and guard him with my life, and I will try to

live as you would have me; let your heart rest on that."

"It does," she said softly; "I have implicit faith in you."

He clasped her hands and held them to his face. He had fought against the bitter truth for hours, but in that moment it forced itself upon him, and he felt that the realities were melting from her and that she was slipping into the shadowy beyond. A despairing sense of his utter weakness overwhelmed him.

At length she began talking of the past,—the long ago,—when they were boy and girl; so that, for a short time, the vivid present, with its awful possibilities, seemed far away.

"Do you remember, Fax, the white doves you gave me when I was a little bit of a girl? You weren't a very big boy, either; and yet you seemed very old to me then. I remember you built them a house with a tiny door in it and nailed it up on father's barn. I was so fond of the little things, and loved to feed them the livelong day. They were so tame I could feed them

from my hand. I have forgotten whether I had them a week or a year, or what became of them in the end, but those white doves with their soft eyes and mournful calls to each other, I remember distinctly." She paused. "It is odd," she continued, "how some things make an indelible impression upon children; how some trivial occurrence will often stand out like a milepost, and last a lifetime. Thousands of other things must have happened to me at that time, yet I have forgotten every one of them. But I remember the doves as if it were yesterday."

"My darling, I'm afraid you ought not to talk."

"It cannot hurt me, Fax; I feel stronger than I've felt for days. It does me good to talk to you."

Hope sprang to his face as he softly touched her hair.

"Oh, I've been thinking of so many things the last few days. Do you remember, Fax, how happy, how more than happy, we were when I lived in the little house, and you had just come home from college?"

Do you remember how, every Sunday afternoon, we'd go to Glenwood Grove, and how you used to read aloud? Thackeray and Shakspeare for you, Dickens and Longfellow for me. You have a beautiful voice, Fax. Do you remember what good times we had together?" Her changing face was like the sun in its brightness.

"I remember it all. And oh, your music, Margaret!" he answered eagerly with a smile. He had forgotten the morrow!

"No one ever understood it, or cared for it, as you did," she said half dreamily. "I gave it up long ago. But it has never given me up, never. Ah yes! music has always been to me a sublime sense of pleasure. At times," she said slowly, as if weighing her words, "I've thought, perhaps *real* music might be the soul of God. And do you know, dear Fax, I've never heard an exquisite melody since we parted without wishing you could share it with me."

"I've felt that way about so many things," he replied. "You couldn't help thinking of me, Margaret; for you have

been in my thoughts always—day and night.” He rose and sat on the bed and put his arms round her; he drew her head close to his breast, and kissed her.

“Oh yes, it is true!” she said. “I’ve felt your love around me all my life. Ah, I felt it in my heart, but I did not understand.” She sighed; her voice was growing weaker. “And sometimes, when you were so many miles away, I could almost feel your presence.”

His face was as white as death. She closed her eyes in silence and lay in his arms, as if sleeping. In that hush, the watch on the stand near the bed could be heard distinctly crooning time’s sombre requiem. Gloom was deepening in the little room.

“And now my life is finished, and it seems like a dream. ‘Never, forever—forever never—never here, forever there.’” Her voice was scarcely audible as she breathed the sad words.

“Margaret! dearest! dearest! my heart is breaking!”

“Forever there, dear love. Ah, I am so

happy with you!" She crept closer to him, holding him fast, and a shudder passed through her.

"Jim—bring him," she said faintly, "I—am—going."

His eyes darkened with dread as a change swept over her face. He walked blindly to the door and passed into the hall. Mrs. Marmion and the child were half-way up the staircase.

"Mother!" he cried sharply, "bring Jim; Margaret want's him."

A low cry fell from Mrs. Marmion's lips, she thrilled with terror at the sound of his voice, and her heart told her as well as the expression of his face that the apprehended time was near. She grasped the boy's hand and hastened forward.

As they entered the room, Margaret was sitting up in bed, gazing toward the door, the tender look of the unforgotten doves in her eyes. She stretched out her arms to the child, and he flew into them.

"I brought you some flowers, mother dear," he said, holding a bunch of sweet-scented roses toward her. "I got 'em in

Mrs. Marmion's house-garden. Wasn't she kind to let me have 'em?"

Mrs. Marmion took the flowers from his hand and put them upon the table by the bed, her tears falling among their soft petals.

"One," Margaret sighed, smiling fondly at the child.

Mrs. Marmion selected a rare blossom from the table and gave it to the boy. He held it laughingly up to Margaret's face, then laid it in her snowy hand.

Marmion raised the child to the bed, and the little fellow clasped his arms round his mother's neck.

"Sweetheart — little sweetheart — God bless and protect you," she said, very faintly. "Be good to Fax—my little one—and he will love——" Her sweet voice died away into silence, and she sank from Marmion's arms back on the bed.

The child pressed closer to her and laid his warm, flushed cheek against the white one on the pillow. He put his red, laughing lips to her ear. "Mother! mother dear!" he said softly. "Open your eyes."

His eyes opened wide with fear, and his small body trembled from head to foot. "Mother, mother, I am here!" he sobbed wildly.

Mrs. Marmion lifted him from the bed.

"Oh! oh! I cannot make her hear!" he repeated over and over between his sobs.

Mrs. Marmion drew the child from the bed, crying softly to herself as she tried to quiet him.

Marmion bent over the still figure and placed his ear against her heart. "Margaret! Margaret! And I must live!" he whispered in agony. He straightened himself, his lips tightly compressed, and looked silently down on the quiet face, framed in the shining hair. Like a fair white lily it lay, upturned toward heaven, in peace and purity. Her hand clasped the flower of love, whose fragrant leaves were fading on her breast in pathetic sadness. It was over!

He turned his head and closed his eyes. His heart was weeping at the grave of its happiness.

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